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The Peasant's Pre-Emption Right: An Abortive Reform of the Macedonian Emperors

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THE PEASANT'S PRE-EMPTION RIGHT

AN ABORTIVE REFORM OF THE MACEDONIAN EMPERORS

By G. OSTROGORSKY

The struggle which the Byzantine government had to wage in the tenth century to protect small freeholders against the landed aristocracy represents a most interesting and important phase in the internal development of the Byzantine State. It can be said without exaggeration that the issue of the struggle determined the very fate of the Empire. The history of this stubborn, dramatic conflict has been outlined more than once.¹ My intention is not to narrate it again, but to illustrate by a few concrete examples the causes which prevented the Byzantine government from effectively safeguarding the smallholder.

The system of land tenure by free peasant proprietors and *stratiotai*—soldiers settled in the themes—formed the mainstay of the Byzantine Empire from the time of its recovery in the seventh century, as well as its principal source of both internal strength and external power. Naturally, the imperial government intervened in favour of the smallholder when it became clear that peasant and stratiote property was being rapidly absorbed by big landholders, with their former owners becoming serfs on the estates of lay landowners and monasteries. In protecting the smallholder against the encroachments of the feudal landed aristocracy, the State endeavoured to safeguard its soldiers and its best taxpayers, as well as its actual existence; for the development of the centrifugal forces of feudalism constituted a menace to the centralized and autocratic power of the Byzantine emperors.

The novel of Romanus I Lecapenus of April, 922, opened a long series of legislative enactments by which the Byzantine government sought to protect the smallholder. First of all it granted the peasants the right of pre-emption (προτίμησης) as purchasers of real estate alienated by their neighbours. Peasant holdings had to be offered for sale first to neighbouring peasants in a strictly determined order of preference, while outsiders could participate in the deal only if the neighbours refused to buy. Furthermore, the novel of Romanus Lecapenus altogether forbade the 'powerful' (οἱ δυνατοί) to acquire the lands of poor peasants (οἱ πένητες).² This prohibition was repeated in the novel of Romanus Lecapenus of 934 which sharply criticized the cupidity of the powerful, and decreed the restitution to their former owners of illegally acquired estates.³ The legislative enactments of Constantine XII Porphyrogenitus,⁴ Romanus II,⁵ and Basil II⁶—whose measures against the feudal landed aristocracy were particularly drastic—re-iterated with growing severity and determination the same regulations, and contained similar and increasingly bitter and scornful complaints and denunciations. But the very fact that Byzantine emperors had to re-iterate their orders again and again shows clearly enough that their decrees failed to achieve the desired effect. At the best they delayed and impeded, but they never actually checked, the expansion of big landholding. After the death of Basil II, legislation favouring the small proprietor was discontinued. The central authority had been forced to capitulate. In the end the triumph of the feudal aristocracy was complete.

It cannot be doubted that the victory of the feudal aristocracy and the ensuing decline in free peasant land-tenure were the primary causes of downfall of the Byzantine State. Therefore the reasons underlying the failure of the imperial measures to safeguard the smallholder are of the greatest interest to a student of Byzantium.

¹ Cf. the classical study of V. G. Vasilievsky, 'Materials for the Internal History of the Byzantine State' (in Russian), *Trudy* IV (1930), 250, 331, and among more recent publications, G. Ostrogorsky, 'Agrarian Conditions in the Byzantine Empire,' *The Cambridge Economic History* I (1942), 204 ff., and *Geschichte des byzantinischen Staates* (1940), 192 ff.

² J. and P. Zepos, *Źus Graecoromanum* I, 198 ff.

³ *Ibid.*, 205 ff.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 214 ff., 222 ff., 239.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 240 ff., 243 ff.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 262 ff.

Historians have already considered these causes, pointing out the distressing position of a peasantry crushed by taxation; the impetus and ever-growing force of expansion of large land-tenure both lay and ecclesiastical; the common class-interests which bound together, on the one hand, landowners—against whom the imperial decrees were directed—and, on the other, officials and judges responsible, in actual fact, for enforcing or disregarding these decrees.⁷ The purpose of the present article is to illustrate and corroborate these general conclusions by a few specific instances drawn from documents contemporary with the agrarian legislation of the Macedonian dynasty. Imperial novels constantly and bitterly denounce officials and judges for variously and frequently circumventing and evading the law, but naturally yield no information about the exact nature of their malpractices. The latter can only be known from documents which mirror the course of day-to-day life.

We have at our disposal only a very limited number of documents dating from the time when the agrarian legislation of the Macedonian dynasty was in force. The important new edition of the Acts of the Laura Monastery comprises a number, some of which had remained hitherto unpublished.⁸ The most ancient documents in the archives of the Laura concern the monastery of St. Andrew, at Peristerae, which later came to be the property of the Laura. We will limit our article to a study of the documents concerning this monastery. Although unfortunately few in number, they are most illuminating; moreover, as will soon be seen, one of them touches directly on the problems raised by the agrarian legislation of the Macedonian dynasty.

* * *

The monastery of St. Andrew at Peristerae, in the hills, 20 km. east of Saloniki, was founded in 871 by the famous hermit Euthymius.⁹ However, as an independent community, it existed for less than a century. Later it was handed over by its abbot Stephen to the Laura of St. Athanasius. The *typikon* of Athanasius shows that the transfer was based on an order contained in a chrysobull of Nicephorus Phocas, confirmed later by another chrysobull of John Zimisces.¹⁰ Neither of the two chrysobulls has come down to us, but yet another one of Nicephorus Phocas to the Laura, dated May, 964, is still in existence;¹¹ in it the Emperor makes a reference to his two previous chrysobulls and confirms his earlier donations of real and movable estate to the Laura: these donations included evidently the handing over of the monastery at Peristerae to the Laura. Consequently, the chrysobull regarding the transfer of the former must have been issued between 16th August, 963—the date of the accession of Nicephorus Phocas—and May, 964. This is consistent with the fact pointed out by Dölger¹² that, according to the Life of Athanasius, the transfer took place before Nicephorus set out on his Syrian campaign in spring, 964.¹³

It appears from the *typikon* of Athanasius that the transfer was brought about by the moral decadence of the monastery at Peristerae.¹⁴ At all events, it was not economic decay that caused the latter to forfeit its independence. On the contrary, economically the Peristerae monastery was far from declining; for the Laura took it over, together with the estate of Tsekhlianae, which was apparently its property, and 100 *zeugaratoi*,¹⁵ i.e. 100 peasant homesteads in the upper census category.

⁷ Cf. V. G. Vasilievsky, op. cit.; G. Ostrogorsky, op. cit.

⁸ G. Rouillard et P. Collomp, *Actes de Laura* I (897–1178), avec un album de 30 planches (Paris, 1937). (Further cited as *Laura*.)

⁹ K. Lake, *The Early Days of Monasticism on Mount Athos* (Oxford, 1909), 49 ff., 53 ff.; P. Uspensky, *A History of Athos* (in Russian) III (Kiev, 1877), 32. From the point of view of archaeology the church of Peristerae was studied by the Dane, K. F. Kinch, *Festschrift til J. L. Ussing* (Copenhagen, 1900), 144 ff. Cf. *Byz. Zeitschr.* 11 (1902), 273, 663 ff.

¹⁰ Ph. Meyer, *Die Haupturkunden für die Geschichte*

der Athosklöster (Leipzig, 1894), 119–121; Dölger, *Reg.* 704 and 744.

¹¹ *Laura*, No. 6.

¹² Dölger, *Reg.* 704.

¹³ Cf. G. Schlumberger, *Nicéphore Phocas* (Paris, 1923), 340 ff.

¹⁴ Ph. Meyer, op. cit., 120, 15 ff.; K. Lake, op. cit., 53.

¹⁵ Dölger, *Reg.* 704. Later, in the chrysobull of Alexis Comnenus of 1109, (*Laura*, No. 53), Peristerae is mentioned as an estate (προόστειον) belonging to the Laura, and curiously enough it is again mentioned in connection with Tsekhlianae: τῶν δύο προαστείων τῶν Περιστερῶν καὶ τῶν Τσεχλιάνων.

The archives of the Peristerae monastery naturally went over also to the Laura. This explains why several and, moreover, the oldest documents in the archives of the Laura, actually belong to the Peristerae monastery relating to the years when it was still an independent entity. These documents throw some light on the ways in which the Peristerae monastery achieved prosperity and expanded its land-holdings at a time when the laws of the Byzantine State were opposed to such expansion. Furthermore, these documents enable us to answer a question of general historical interest: namely, why did the measures devised by the Byzantine government to check the growth of large landed estates fail to achieve their purpose?

We can disregard the first and most ancient document of the Laura collection¹⁶ concerning the sale by a pious family of its property situated in the town of Saloniki to Euthymius, abbot of the monastery at Peristerae; since this document goes back to 897, it is anterior to the legislation favouring the smallholder. The second,¹⁷ on the other hand, is of outstanding interest to us since it deals with so important an element of this legislation as the right of *protimesis*, i.e. the preference granted to smallholders in buying their neighbours' real estate: moreover, it provides a most interesting example of how this right could be dodged.

The document is the verdict of Samonas, *spatharocandidatus*, *asekretes*, and judge of Saloniki, and concerns property partly sold and partly donated by a certain cleric, David, to abbot Stephen. This abbot Stephen referred to as monk and abbot only once, at the outset of the document, and elsewhere more humbly designated simply as monk, is certainly none other than the Stephen mentioned above, the last abbot of Peristerae, who handed over his monastery to the Laura in 963 or 964, as is noted in a later text on the back of the document.¹⁸ The editors of the Laura documents failed to make this natural identification owing to a mistake in their dating of the document.¹⁹ It is dated November of the 11th indiction, without mention of the year. Since it refers to the right of preferential purchase in the sense first given to it in the famous novel of Romanus Lecapenus of April, 922, the editors rightly infer that the document could not be earlier than the novel; but it is not at all clear why they should categorically and peremptorily ascribe it to November, 922. Obviously, the date of the novel of Romanus regarding the right of preferential purchase supplies solely the *terminus post quem*. Our document could not have been drafted before 922, but it could have been drawn up in later years, at any time during the period when the peasants' right of pre-emption remained in force. This was pointed out by Dölger in his excellent study on the Laura collection.²⁰ With great insight Dölger indicated that the reasonings of the judge Samonas imply that he was acquainted not merely with the 922 novel of Romanus, but also with Constantine's of 947. Therefore Dölger proposes to regard November, 952, which corresponds to the 11th indiction as the *terminus post quem*. However, Dölger did not recognize in Stephen, monk and abbot—and buyer of the estates—the abbot of Peristerae who resigned his monastery to Athanasius of Laura in 963–4. Yet all objections to this natural identification are cleared away with the removal of the editors' erroneous dating; and this identification best explains how our document found its way into the archives of the Laura. Consequently we may assume that November, 952, is not merely the *terminus post quem*, as suggested by Dölger, but is the actual and indisputable date of our document's promulgation; for by 967–8, the year in which falls the next 11th indiction, the Peristerae monastery had ceased to exist, having become subordinate to the Laura of Athanasius.²¹ So we come to the conclusion that document No. 2 in the edition of G. Rouillard and P. Collomp was issued in November, 952: like documents

¹⁶ Laura, No. 1.

¹⁷ Laura, No. 2.

¹⁸ Laura, p. 5.

¹⁹ Cf. editors' notes, pp. xxvii and 5.

²⁰ F. Dölger, 'Zur Textgestaltung der Laura-Urkunden und zu ihrer geschichtlichen Auswertung', *Byz. Zeitschr.* xxxix (1939), 31 ff.

²¹ Moreover, since the novel of Nicephorus

Phocas enacted in September, 967 (Zepos I, 253 ff.; cf. Dölger, *Reg.* 712) decreed that peasants should buy from peasants and landowners from landowners, the judge needed no longer have taken into consideration the right of preferential purchase in its former meaning; for this right was restored only with the promulgation of the 996 novel of Basil II (*Źus* I, 262 ff.).

Nos. 1 and 3, it concerns the Peristerae monastery, from whose archives they were all transferred to those of the Laura monastery—possibly with some other ancient documents.

In substance, the lawsuit examined by Samonas was as follows: David, a cleric, had inherited from his mother Theodora a brickyard (ἐργαστήριον πρὸς κεράμων κατασκευὴν ἐπιτήδειον) as well as plots of land, together with their farm-buildings χωραφιαίων τόπων καὶ τῆς καθέδρας αὐτῶν, which were near the coast.²² He sold the brickyard for three gold coins to abbot Stephen, to whom he also donated the fields and farm-buildings. In order to explain and justify this somewhat strange action, the judge insistently stresses that the donated property was the dowry of David's mother. Nevertheless, some of David's neighbours objected to the transaction, and one of them, the *drungarius* John, even attempted forcibly to evict 'monk' Stephen from his newly acquired estates. This gave rise to the lawsuit. Yet, when John and Stephen appeared in court, the sole argument which John could put forward, according to the judge, was that he had endeavoured to uphold the Sovereign's rights, which—again according to the judge—would have brought only great ruin to the neighbouring poor. Their tender-hearted champion gives no reasons for his view, nor does he make in this connection any reference to the right of pre-emption which the neighbours of the cleric David seem to have invoked. For at any rate their protest against the transaction between David and abbot Stephen was evidently motivated by a reference to the neighbours' right of pre-emption as recognized by the imperial laws: it was probably in this sense that John claimed to contend for the Sovereign's rights. Our judge mentions the right of pre-emption only in his next sentence, which is also his verdict on the dispute, and is worth quoting in full. 'Since there were serfs of the powerful on three sides and no poor man could substantiate his preferential right to the purchase of the aforesaid brickyard alone, it is ruled that monk Stephen has lawfully acquired it, together with the gift of the other property herein described.'²³ Furthermore, according to the judge, the four-month²⁴ period (for claiming the right of pre-emption) having elapsed, the latter could no longer be invoked: in so far as the right of pre-emption had lapsed and the plaintiffs had no other grounds for seeking to invalidate the deal, their complaint was completely without foundation.²⁵

It is worth noting that the action was brought not on the initiative of the peasants, for whom and in whose favour the law established the right of pre-emption, but on that of the 'powerful man' John, a former *drungarius*. Apparently, the peasants in their oppressed condition could not uphold their rights, and had it not been for ex-*drungarius* John, who intervened for some reasons of his own, there would have been no lawsuit whatever. Yet, even court proceedings proved of no avail. Although the judge used legal arguments and quoted the law, he was actually contending not for justice but for the interests of that party to which he was bound by common interests. As I have said elsewhere, 'the great landowners and the officials formed, so to speak, a caste.'²⁶ The lawsuit which we have just examined wholly confirms this view. Moreover, it provides an excellent and vivid illustration of the words of Emperor Constantine Porphyrogenitus that, influenced by the powerful, 'judges often return verdicts based not on the law but made to suit circumstances (κατ' οἰκονομίαν), sometimes in one way, sometimes in another.'²⁷ Judge Samonas, too, decided κατ' οἰκονομίαν. Let us examine his arguments more closely. On three sides (!)

²² It is preferable to read γειτονούντων instead of γειτονοῦσης since it appears that not only the building but also the plots which it serviced were near the sea coast. Cf. *Viz. Vrem.* v (1898), 483.

²³ *Laura*, No. 2, 21-5: ἐπεὶ οὖν ἐκ τριῶν πλευρῶν τινες ἐδείκνυντο τῶν δυνατῶν προσκαθήμενοι, δίκαιον δὲ προτιμήσεως οὐδέτερος πένης εὗρισκεν πρὸς τὸ δηλωθὲν κεραμεῖον μόνον ἐξαγοράσαι, μετὰ τῆς τῶν ἄλλων τῶν ἀναγκαζομένων δωρεᾶς ἐκρίθη νομίμως καὶ τὴν τοῦτου [for τοῦτων] ἐξώνησιν τὸν μοναχὸν ποιήσασθαι Στέφανον.

²⁴ Instead of τετραμεροῦς one should read τετραμηνούς, as pointed out by Dölger, *op. cit.*, 32, whose emendations are also accepted elsewhere.

²⁵ *Laura*, No. 2, 26-30.

²⁶ *Cambr. Economic Hist.* 1, 207. It may be noted that our judge Samonas belonged to the 'powerful' by his official position as well as by birth. He was undoubtedly—the rarity of the name justifies this presumption—a descendant, perhaps a grandson of the famous patrician Samonas, *protovestiarius*, then *parakoimomenus* of the Emperor Leo VI. For him, cf. Kougeas, *Byz.-Neugr. Jahrb.* v (1927), 202 f.

²⁷ *Jus* 1, 215.

the disputed property bordered on lands worked by the serfs of landlords, and John, a former *drungarius*, may presumably have been one of them. Since the land belonged not to peasants but to the 'powerful', Samonas excluded them from exercising the right of pre-emption, without further ado, although in their capacity as neighbours they could lay better claim to the property than the monastery at Peristerae, which was in no way a neighbour of the seller, whose holdings were by the coast while the monastery stood a good 20 km. from the sea.²⁸

So much for the three sides. What of the fourth about which judge Samonas maintains a discreet silence? Obviously on this side, the property bordered on holdings of the poor, cursorily alluded to by the judge, i.e. on those of free peasant smallholders to whom the imperial legislation granted the right of pre-emption whenever their neighbours alienated their land. That such were the facts, and that peasants entitled to preferential purchase existed is pretty certain, since Samonas himself does not deny it. But . . . he asserts that none of them could prove his preferential right to buy the brickyard *alone*. How are we to understand this sophistry? Dölger rightly argues²⁹ that the judge took advantage of provision in the 947 novel of Constantine VII regarding estates forming a single whole (ἰδιοσύστατον):³⁰ buyers even when enjoying the right of pre-emption had to buy the whole of such a property or relinquish their claim to it; they were allowed a four months' time limit to collect the money needed for the purchase.³¹

Yet it is not so easy to understand the train of thought of the resourceful judge. Dölger presumes that the peasants' right of pre-emption extended to the brickyard alone and not to the other property alienated by David because the other plots may not have bordered on theirs; so the judge dismissed their claim on the grounds that David's property formed an economic unit and that, in pursuance of the novel of 947, either the whole or none of the property was subject to the right of pre-emption.³² Of course such an argument would have been a misinterpretation of the law on the right of pre-emption and would have made its application impossible in practice whenever two non-adjacent properties were being sold simultaneously. By declaring these properties an economic unit one could have denied the neighbours of the first property their right of pre-emption on the grounds that their holdings were not contiguous to the second, while similarly denying the rights of the neighbours of the second property because their plots were not contiguous to the first. But the course taken by our judge was, apparently, still more off-hand. There is nothing to show that the peasants' holdings bordered on the brickyard alone, or that their claims were limited to it; the judge states nothing to this effect, and he would have probably not omitted a point so advantageous to his client. It was not a matter of the peasants' wishes or of the validity of their claims, but of legal interpretation by a cunning judge. He simply excluded those plots which David had not sold but donated to abbot Stephen, and, treating them as a gift, deemed it unnecessary to raise the question whether the right of pre-emption was applicable to them. This he could do by availing himself of a clause in the 922 novel of Romanus I, according to which the right of pre-emption is applicable in the case of sale or lease, but 'that real estate given in dowry, or as betrothal gift, or donated as simple gift, or in case of death, or bequeathed by testament, or bartered, can be acquired by both neighbours and outsiders'.³³ As a matter of fact, the novel goes on to explain that similar transactions must not be faked to screen actual sales and purchases—hence the insistence with which our judge emphasizes that the property donated by cleric David to abbot Stephen had been received in dower by his mother, inherited from her,

²⁸ Cf. map in K. Lake, *op. cit.*

²⁹ F. Dölger, *op. cit.*, *Byz. Zeitschr.* xxxix (1939), 32.

³⁰ Or ἰδιοστάτον more frequently in other sources. Cf. provisions regarding such estates in *Treatise on Taxation*, ed. by W. Ashburner, *JHS* xxxv (1915), sections 1, 5, 6 = ed. F. Dölger, *Beiträge zur Gesch. der byz. Finanzverwaltung* (1927), 114, 27; 116, 1, 19, 37; 117, 1, 17. Commentary: F. Dölger, *op. cit.*, 138; G. Ostrogorsky, 'Die

ländliche Steuergemeinde des byz. Reiches im X Jh.', *Vierteljahrschr. f. Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgesch.* xx (1927), 21 ff.

³¹ *Jus* 1, 217. A comparison of Samonas's argumentation and this provision in the 947 novel of Constantine VII shows that Samonas was acquainted with the novel of 947, as stated above.

³² F. Dölger, *op. cit.*, *Byz. Zeitschr.* xxxix (1939), 33.

³³ *Jus* 1, 203.

and donated to abbot Stephen in good faith. In this way, the judge deemed himself authorized on legal grounds to exclude from the proceedings the plots David had given, not sold, to abbot Stephen.³⁴ There remained the brickyard sold for the very low price of three *nomismata*. Here Samonas took advantage of the above-mentioned clause of the 947 novel regarding properties forming a whole, and, without stating his reasons, applied it to David's brickyard and his plots. In so far as it was admitted that the brickyard sold formed a whole with the donated plots and, consequently, could not be sold apart from them, it naturally followed that the peasants were 'unable to substantiate their pre-emption right to purchase the brickyard alone'. The obvious course was to sanction the purchase of the brickworks by abbot Stephen; for he alone could acquire them, 'together with the gift of the other plots herein described'.

Thus a very simple method was devised to evade the law on peasants' preferential rights. Part of an alienated property need simply be 'donated', and then the donated part and that offered for sale declared a single unit, for the entire property to pass—despite the law of preferential purchase—into the hands of the recipient of the 'donation'. It can be surmised that others apart from abbot Stephen and judge Samonas may also have hit upon the method.

So the greed of Byzantine landowners, both secular and ecclesiastical, was breaking down all legal barriers, and the good intentions of the legislator were being wrecked by the resourcefulness and cunning of Byzantine judges who sided invariably with the 'powerful'. In vain, the government endeavoured to foresee and forestall attempts to evade the laws it enacted: the 'powerful' and the judges excelled it in foresight. In the wording of the 934 novel of Romanus Lecapenus 'wickedness is a thing of many tricks and shifts, and cupidity is especially ingenious in eluding the control of laws and proclamations'.³⁵ The case we have examined, disclosing Samonas's methods of administering justice, brings home to us the even more forceful words of another Byzantine Emperor: 'We must beware lest we send upon the unfortunate poor the calamity of law-officers, more merciless than famine itself.'³⁶

* * *

Corruption among judges was not the sole factor helping landowners to increase their holdings in contravention to the law which granted peasants a preferential right to acquire alienated real estate. It happened too, that the government itself issued orders, which contradicted the very laws it had enacted. Document No. 3 of the Laura collection dated August, 941, shows Thomas, imperial *protospatharius*, *asekretes*, *epoptes*, and *anagrapheus* of Saloniki, selling two sizable estates totalling 1,800 *modii* (approx. 150 hectares) of escheated State lands on the Cassandra peninsula to the monastery at Peristerae represented by abbot Euthymius. In document No. 4, also dated August, 941, the same Thomas sells another 100 *modii* of escheated land on the Cassandra peninsula to a certain Nicholas, son of Agathon.

We know, however, that the 922 novel of Romanus Lecapenus expressly stated that the peasants' preferential right of purchase was also applicable to escheated land when it was being sold. 'Even when property other than the plots of the poor is sold, or when the State sells so-called escheated plots (κλασματικοὶ τόποι) or other estates belonging to

³⁴ Actually, this was in flagrant contradiction with another law, namely a provision of the 934 novel of Romanus I, which reads (*Ύμ* 1, 213): 'We do not wish that the good measures that we have decided upon should suffer any infringement under the pretext of donations and endowments made to holy monasteries by those who have entered or intend to enter them as monks. Monasteries will derive sufficient benefit if they receive an equitable money-price in lieu of the land or real estate in every case where the bestowal is really made for the salvation of the soul and not fraudulently to conceal a sale.

We consider that by granting the right of pre-emption also in the case of endowments made to monasteries, we enact a rule beneficial not only to the poor but also to the sacred houses, because their inhabitants will thus be free from disputes, lawsuits and discords, from ignoble and improper cupidity, and it becomes them, being after all creatures of the flesh, to avoid and not to seek occasions of falling.' Cf. V. G. Vasilievsky, op. cit., 279. Cf. also the novel of Constantine VII of 947, *Ύμ* 1, 216.

³⁵ *Ύμ* 1, 208.

³⁶ Nov. Romani II: *Ύμ* 1, 242.

State domain, in that case, too, peasant proprietors shall have preference (προτιμάσθωσαν); only if they refuse of their own accord, may the powerful enter into the transactions.' ³⁷ The unambiguous meaning of the law was that Crown lands for sale were to be offered first to peasants and could be sold to others only if the peasants refused to buy them. Yet both our documents show that the official who effected the sale on the personal orders of the Emperors offered the land to any inhabitant of the theme of Saloniki desirous of buying it. The wording of both acts is practically identical, and in the opening sentences of both, the *epoptes* Thomas announces in practically the same terms that he carries out the transaction 'upon the divine order of our pious, God-anointed, great and peace-loving Emperors Romanus, Constantine, Stephen, and Constantine, who ordered him to sell land on the Pallene peninsula, known also as Cassandra, to inhabitants of the theme of Thessalonica desirous of purchasing it (τοῖς βουλομένοις οἰκήτορσι), because the land was escheat (ὡς κλασματικῆς αὐτῆς τυγχανούσης). ³⁸

Why the land was offered to all and sundry desirous of purchasing it remains an open question. Does it mean that it had been previously offered to peasants entitled to pre-emption and they had refused to buy it, or had it not been offered to them at all? The latter seems the more likely; for, had it been otherwise, our documents would have probably contained something to the effect that, in accordance with the law, the land had been first offered to peasants, whereas our documents are silent on this point and contain no reference whatever to the right of pre-emption.

Escheated land (κλασματική γῆ or simply κλάσμα, in later documents ἐξάλειμμα, ἐξάλειμματική γῆ) was a common phenomenon in Byzantium. The nature and origin of escheats is best explained in the well-known tenth-century *Treatise on Taxation*, quoted earlier. ³⁹ If enemy invasion or some other calamity reduced proprietors to desert their lands, their neighbours became, according to the rules of corporate liability, responsible for paying their share of taxes; *de facto* they became the owners of the deserted plots. But often the neighbours were not in a position to shoulder the burden of additional taxation, and were prepared themselves to abandon their own property and flee anywhere to escape from the burden of additional taxes. Then the *epoptes*, in his capacity of fiscal authority, could exempt the deserted lands from tax liabilities: in other words, he exempted the neighbours from paying an additional tax (ἀλληλέγγυον); in this way he kept them from fleeing and so causing further losses to the revenue. If the fugitives failed to return, and no one else took possession of their plots, thus becoming liable for the incumbent taxes, then, after a period of thirty years, the deserted lands were deemed escheat and fell in to the State, which retained, sold, leased or donated them at its discretion.

Commenting elsewhere on the explanations of the *Treatise on Taxation* and comparing them with the provisions of the novel of Romanus Lecapenus on the preferential right of peasants to purchase escheated land sold by the State, we expressed the view that peasants were unlikely to take advantage of their rights to any considerable extent.

It can hardly be imagined that a peasant, unable to take possession of a plot, or whose ancestors had been unable to do so, merely by assuming the obligation to pay the taxes due, should have wished to buy it, or even rent it, thirty years later. Undoubtedly this can have happened only very occasionally. On the other hand, when escheated property was donated, peasants would be the least likely recipients of such liberalities. Therefore it can be assumed with considerable certainty that, unless escheated lands remained part of the Crown domain, they fell eventually into the hands of the "powerful". Thus escheats too, led to the disintegration of peasant communities and to the absorption of poor peasants' property by those in power.' ⁴⁰

Both Laura documents dealing with the sale of escheated estates strikingly confirm this opinion, and supply a vivid illustration of our theoretical conclusions. Whether the

³⁷ *Jus* 1, 203.

³⁸ *Laura*, No. 3, 2-8; No. 4, 2-6.

³⁹ In particular, sections 5 and 12, ed. Ashburner = Dölger, *Beiträge* 116 and 118 f.

⁴⁰ G. Ostrogorsky, 'Die ländliche Steuergemeinde des byzantinischen Reiches im X Jahrh.', *Vierteljahrschr. f. Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgesch.* xx (1927), 76 ff.

peasants refused to purchase the estates or, as seems more likely, were not given the option, the fact remains that, according to our documents, they did not take advantage of their rights of preferential purchase. Moreover, the same Romanus Lecapenus who, in 922, wished to secure for the peasants a preferential right to purchase escheated lands, twenty years later ordered his officials to offer such lands for sale to any one in a given theme wishing to buy them.

As a result, the monastery at Peristerae bought a large estate, while another more modest purchase was made by a certain Nicholas, son of Agathon, who acquired 100 *modii*. The text gives no clue as to the identity of this buyer. Even if he was a peasant, in any case his purchase was unconnected with the peasants' right of pre-emption; for both our documents are utterly silent on this point, as if this right did not apply to escheats. Possibly Nicholas was in some way connected with the Peristerae monastery—at any rate it can be surmised that the land he bought eventually became its property; for this would explain how a document concerning his purchase came to be in the archives of the Peristerae monastery whence, apparently with other documents (ours, Nos. 1-3), it found its way into those of the Laura.

The extraordinarily low price at which the *epoptes* Thomas sold State lands is very striking. Nicholas paid a mere two *nomismata* for 100 *modii*, i.e. one *nomisma* per fifty *modii*. The land sold to the Peristerae monastery was at the same rate—it paid 36 *nomismata* for 1,800 *modii*.⁴¹ Unfortunately, we do not know the normal prices for land in the tenth century because no other contemporary source yields sufficient data. But the requisite information is available as regards later times, particularly the thirteenth century. The treatises of Byzantine surveyors published by Uspensky give the following prices for land: in the first treatise—1 *hyperpyron* for 1 *modius* of best, 2 *modii* of less good, and 3 *modii* of poor quality land; in the second treatise—1 *hyperpyron* for $1\frac{3}{4}$ *modii* of best, $3\frac{1}{2}$ *modii* of less good, and 7 *modii* of poor quality land.⁴² A study of the considerable material offered by thirteenth-century documents shows also that 1 *hyperpyron* was paid for 1 *modius* of best land, 2-3 *modii* of less good, and 5-10 *modii* of inferior quality land.⁴³ Taking into account that the thirteenth century Byzantine *nomisma* (in later terminology, *hyperpyron*) had only three-quarters of its nominal value, and that with the development of money-economy prices naturally tended to rise, it must still be said that the price paid for the escheated estates on Cassandra was extremely and surprisingly low. Data regarding the value of other commodities for which we have comparable material for the tenth and thirteenth centuries show that there was a natural increase in prices, but that, on the whole, the increase was not great and in no way sufficient to explain the very big difference between the thirteenth century prices for land and that fixed by the *epoptes* Thomas in the Laura

⁴¹ In both documents, apart from the sum paid for the land bought, the buyer is required to pay καὶ τὸ ὑπὲρ τῆς τοιαύτης γῆς δημόσιον εἰς τὴν καταβολὴν τῶν δώδεκα νομισμάτων, κατὰ τὸ ἀνήκόν σοι καὶ ἀναλογούν (*Laura*, No. 3, 24-6; No. 4, 13-14). The meaning of this sentence becomes clearer when it is compared to the *Treatise on Taxation*, edited by Ashburner, and very appropriately quoted by the editors of the *Laura* acts (*Laura* 9). It is stated there (ed. Ashburner, section 15 = ed. Dölger, 120, 12 ff.), that upon buying or receiving in gift escheated land the new owner was required to pay, for the drafting of the deed of sale or donation, a special tax, equivalent to $\frac{1}{12}$ th of the amount levied on the property before it became escheat: ἐάν τὸ κλᾶσμα διεπράθη ἢ ἐδωρήθη, τὸ μὲν παλαιὸν ψηφίον ἀπώλετο . . . προσεγράφετο δὲ ὑπὲρ ἐνὸς ἐκάστου νομίσματος τοῦ παλαιοῦ δημοσίου 'λιβελλικὸν' δημόσιον νόμισμα δωδέκατον'. Cf. also Ashburner, section 29 = Dölger 123, 15 ff. A similar meaning is implied, by the way, in the testimony of Theophanes in his famous narrative on the ten 'plagues' of the

Emperor Nicephorus I: he says, among others, that Nicephorus ordered a new census of taxpayers to be taken, tax rates to be increased, and a duty of 2 *keratia* levied on every entry in the taxpayers' roll: χαρτιστικῶν ἕνεκα ἀνὰ κερατίων β' (Theoph. 486, 28, ed. De Boor). Undoubtedly the 2 *keratia* were levied not on every taxpayer without discrimination as Bury, *Eastern Rom. Emp.* 214, n. 1, and Bratianu, *Études byz. d'hist. économique et sociale* (Paris, 1938), 202, seem to have understood: the 2 *keratia* was the rate of increase on every *nomisma* of the basic tax, which also works out at $\frac{1}{12}$ th. We have already put forward this conjecture (*Geschichte des byzantinischen Staates* 130); now on the basis of the above comparison we can assert it with confidence.

⁴² F. I. Uspensky, 'Byzantine Surveyors' (in Russian), *Trudy VI, Archaeol. Congress of Odessa* (1888) II, 278 and 304 ff.

⁴³ G. Ostrogorsky, 'Löhne und Preise in Byzanz,' *Byz. Zeitschr.* xxxii (1932), 312 ff.

deeds.⁴⁴ It can be added that, according to the Patmos *Praktikon* of 1073, the price for renting land was 1 *nomisma* for 10 *modii*.⁴⁵

Either Thomas simply sacrificed the interests of the Crown to those of the buyers, or else the very low level of prices fixed by him was due to the excessive amount of escheated lands sold simultaneously. Apart from the two Laura documents discussed (Nos. 3 and 4), both of which are dated August, 941, and show two lots of escheated land sold simultaneously on Cassandra, there is also a small group of documents connected with the Laura deed No. 5 which deal with a dispute between the monks of Athos and the inhabitants of Hierissos, also about escheated lands; the latter were situated in the district of the town of Hierissos, i.e. in the northern part of the peninsula of Athos, and had been bought by the inhabitants of the town. The same Thomas, *protospatharius*, *asekretes*, and *epoptes*, whom we have met with as the seller of the Cassandra escheats, was appointed to investigate the dispute. Three curious documents survive as a result of this lawsuit: (1) a sworn attestation of both the monks of Athos and the inhabitants of Hierissos that they will accept the boundaries proposed by Thomas (dated May, xv indiction)⁴⁶; (2) Thomas's report on the boundaries, effected⁴⁷; (3) the resolution of Katakalon, *strategos* of the theme of Thessalonica, published as No. 5 in the edition of the Laura deeds (dated August, 1 indiction).⁴⁸

It cannot be doubted that the first and second documents are of 942 (xv indiction), and the third of 943 (1 indiction)⁴⁹: like the Laura documents, Nos. 3 and 4, they belong to the reign of the Emperors Romanus, Constantine, Stephen and Constantine,⁵⁰ and mention the same *epoptes* Thomas, while the third names as witness Euthymius, abbot of Peristerae who bought from Thomas the escheated lands on Cassandra for his monastery.⁵¹ Considering that, in the first document, it is said that the inhabitants of Hierissos had bought the exempted land recently (πρὸ χρόνου τινός), it can be surmised that they bought it about the same time when the Peristerae monastery and Nicholas, son of Agathon, bought their holdings on Cassandra from the *epoptes* Thomas. Therefore, G. Rouillard is probably right in suggesting that a general order may have been issued about that time to sell all escheated lands in the theme of Saloniki.⁵² The great quantity of escheated lands on the peninsula of Chalcidice was probably due—as was often the case—to enemy invasion, namely to the famous Arab raid on Saloniki in 904, just about thirty years before the date of the deeds under consideration, and the Bulgarian incursions into the province of Saloniki that followed. At all events large sales of escheated land, which we are justified in assuming here, would inevitably bring down prices for land, and this may explain the strange fact that the *epoptes* Thomas sold land at the price of 1 *nomisma* for 50 *modii* (4 hectares).

Even at these exceptionally low prices, the land was beyond the peasants' reach:

⁴⁴ e.g., cf. data collected by us about prices for livestock, op. cit., 326 ff., and wheat, op. cit., 319 ff.

⁴⁵ Miklosich and Miller, *Acta graeca* IV, 15.

⁴⁶ P. Uspensky, *A History of Athos* III (Kiev, 1877, in Russian), 318–320. Reprinted in K. Lake, op. cit., 80–2.

⁴⁷ P. Uspensky, op. cit., 315–18; K. Lake, op. cit., 76–9.

⁴⁸ Alexander Lauriot, 'Athos Acts,' *Viz. Vrem.* v (1898), 485–6; K. Lake, op. cit., 82–4; *Laura*, No. 5.

⁴⁹ G. Rouillard, in her 'Note prosopographique et chronologique', *Byzantion* VIII (1933), 107 ff., has come to the same conclusion and so corrected the chronology given by K. Lake, op. cit., who dated the second document 881–2, and the third 882: Dölger, *Reg.* 504, too, had dated the third document 883. The correct chronology—although worked out in an unnecessarily complicated way and established on somewhat disputable foundations—had been given already by P. Uspensky, op. cit., 58 ff., who was wrong only in his calculation of the indiction, and dated the first and second documents 943 (instead of 942). Apparently the statement in

K. Lake, op. cit., 66, that Uspensky dates them 934 is a misprint.

⁵⁰ According to P. Uspensky, op. cit., 58 and 315, Thomas's report was drawn up under these Emperors, i.e. under Romanus I Lecapenus, Constantine VII, Porphyrogenitus, and Stephen and Constantine Lecapeni. Apparently—although P. Uspensky unfortunately gives no precise indication—this is stated in the initial part of the document not quoted by Uspensky, who had not succeeded in deciphering it satisfactorily. It seems that both G. Rouillard and K. Lake failed to notice this important remark, which would have simplified Rouillard's argument and preserved Lake from his erroneous chronological conclusions.

⁵¹ G. Rouillard, op. cit., 112, identifies this Euthymius with the abbot Euthymius mentioned in 897 in deed No. 1 of the Laura acts edited by her. It seems to us more natural to admit the existence of two other abbots of Peristerae called Euthymius besides St. Euthymius, its founder; for it does not appear likely that the same person could have been the abbot in 897 as well as in 943.

⁵² G. Rouillard, op. cit., 110.

as we have seen, the existence of escheated lands was due to the peasants being often unable to take possession of land deserted by their neighbours on the one condition of paying the taxation due on it. However low the price at which the lands referred to in the Laura documents may have been sold, it was considerably more than the tax-liability. According to the treatises of the thirteenth century Byzantine surveyors, quoted above, 1 *hyperpyron* was the tax levied on 48 *modii* of superior, or 100 *modii* of inferior land.⁵³ When comparing these rates with the prices paid in our documents for escheated land (1 *nomisma* for 50 *modii*), it should be borne in mind that the Byzantine *hyperpyron* of the thirteenth century was worth only about three-quarters of its initial value, and, moreover, that escheated estates must naturally have been inferior land: actually, it is even stated in document No. 3 that, of the 1,800 *modii* bought by the Peristerae monastery, 1,200 *modii* was uncultivated fallow land. Peasants would evidently find it difficult to buy derelict property requiring the investment of considerable working capital and labour. On the other hand, big landowners buying up such estates at a low price could bring them rapidly under cultivation and so increase their real property at no excessive cost. Land that had once slipped from the hands of peasants never returned to them. Peasant homesteads melted away, while the holdings of big landowners, including monasteries, grew unceasingly.

Even the very few documents of the Peristerae monastery at our disposal evoke a vivid picture of the rapid expansion of its holdings in land despite legislation opposed to the growth of large estates. We witness the monastery at Peristerae receiving land in gift and buying it from private individuals, buying escheated land for next to nothing from the State, with the result that during the short period of its existence it succeeded in accumulating considerable landed property. It owned land on the Bay of Thessalonica (No. 2), on the Cassandra peninsula (No. 3), and in the town of Saloniki itself (No. 1).

⁵³ F. I. Uspensky, 'Byzantine Surveyors' (in Russian), *Trudy VI, Archaeolog. Congress in Odessa* (1888) II, 306.



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The Byzantine Emperor and the Hierarchical World Order*

GEORGE OSTROGORSKY

THE political ideas of the Byzantines have only recently become the subject of more detailed study and of a deeper contemplation among historians. The research work done in this field in the course of the last few decades has for the first time revealed the substance and peculiarities of the Byzantine theory of imperial authority and established it as the mainspring of the Byzantine political ideology. Among the most outstanding studies the following may be mentioned: the penetrating researches of A. Alföldi on the formation of Roman court ceremonial and on the insignia and robes of the Roman emperor;¹ the very vivid and interesting work by A. Grabar on the emperor in Byzantine art;² the fundamentally important work by O. Treitinger on imperial court ceremonial as an expression of the Byzantine idea of emperorship and empire;³ numerous very instructive papers by F. Dölger on the relations between the Byzantine empire and contemporary foreign powers in the light of the Byzantine theory of imperial authority.⁴ And already since 1936 I myself have been attempting to outline the Byzantine interpretation of the idea of empire and the Byzantine conception of the world order, to which I gave the name of the Byzantine hierarchy of states.⁵ I should like to follow up these trends of thought today and to summarise them in a more coherent manner.

Although the destinies of the Byzantine empire varied a great deal and the character of its state policies was apparently heterogeneous, the basic idea underlying these policies, the idea of emperorship, was firmly upheld through the ages, in spite of all divergencies. Like all other elements of fundamental significance for the development of the Byzantine state, this idea is traceable to Roman and Hellenistic sources. And, like everything else in Byzantium, it emerges here in a christianised version, in which the original pagan concept has been little by little overshadowed by the power of Christian ideas.

* Lecture given at King's College, London, and at the University of Edinburgh on 12 and 18 January 1956 respectively.

¹ A. Alföldi, 'Die Ausgestaltung des monarchischen Zeremoniells am römischen Kaiserhof', *Mitt. d. Deutschen Archäol. Inst., Röm. Abt.* 49 (1934), pp. 1-118; 'Insignien und Tracht der römischen Kaiser', *ibid.*, 50 (1935), pp. 1-176.

² A. Grabar, *L'empereur dans l'art byzantin*, Paris, 1936.

³ O. Treitinger, *Die oströmische Kaiser- und Reichsidee nach ihrer Gestaltung im höfischen Zeremoniell*, Jena, 1938.

⁴ Reprinted in F. Dölger, *Byzanz und die europäische Staatenwelt*, Ettal, 1953.

⁵ G. Ostrogorsky, 'Die byzantinische Staatenhierarchie', *Seminarium Kondakovianum*, 8 (1936), pp. 41-61.

It is well known that the pagan concept of the god-emperor represented the crucial stumbling-block for Christians and that their refusal to worship the emperor as a god was the main reason for the persecution of Christians in the ancient Roman empire. Nevertheless, the transition from pagan to Christian empire was completed without any outward distortion of the concept of imperial authority in the time of Constantine. The sovereign's power preserved its divine character, and thus the Roman-Hellenistic cult of the sovereign lived on in the Christian Byzantine empire in all its ancient glory. This would not have been possible if the idea of emperorship had not gained a deeper sense even in the pagan world. The idea of the divine origin of the sovereign's power was gradually built up around the original naïve concept of the god-emperor. The Christian Byzantine empire accepted this conception, for nothing could appear more natural to Christians than to see in the Christian emperor a sovereign appointed by God's will. Moreover, belief in its divine vocation accorded to the Christian emperorship a sacred character that made possible the maintenance of old forms of rites and even gave them a natural appearance.⁶

The Christian subjects of the Emperor Constantine firmly believed that he had been called to rule by the Christian God, and he himself ordered an effigy to be struck on a gold medallion representing the hand of God placing the imperial crown on his head.⁷ Many works of art belonging to a later epoch reproduce a similar *motif*—the crowning of the emperor by Christ, who is seen setting the crown on the sovereign's head with His own hand.⁸

The emperor is the Chosen of God, he is called to rule by Divine Providence and fulfills the Divine Will in his quality of sovereign of the empire protected by God. This idea dominates the minds of all the Byzantines, from the emperor to the last of his subjects. They are constantly reminded of it both in speeches and in written documents. It emanates incessantly from monuments with which public buildings and streets are adorned, from seals and coins circulating from hand to hand. It is shown to them in a particularly striking manner in all the rites of the imperial court ceremonial which are emphasised by an exuberance of symbols, with the sacred figure of the emperor in the centre.

It would be a mistake to consider the Byzantine court ceremonial as a stiff system of effete formalities. It was, in fact, a carefully elaborated system of rites aimed at the glorification of the emperor and

⁶ Cf. J. A. Straub, *Vom Herrscherideal in der Spätantike*, Stuttgart, 1939. W. Ensslin, 'Gottkaiser und Kaiser von Gottes Gnaden', *Sb. d. Bayer. Akad. d. Wiss.*, 1943, Heft 6, München, 1943. N. H. Baynes, *Byzantine Studies and Other Essays*, London, 1955, pp. 168 ff., 343 ff.

⁷ Alföldi, *Insigien*, pp. 55 f. and fig. 6.

⁸ Grabar, *op. cit.*, pp. 112 ff.

of his empire. And these rites were used for the implementation of a political and religious cult of a peculiar nature.

The learned emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus wrote a book containing a detailed description of the imperial court ceremonial. Such a subject, as he himself admits in the preface, was dearer to his heart than any other, because 'through the praise-worthy system of court ceremonial the imperial power is displayed in greater beauty and magnificence, thus filling with admiration both foreign nations and our citizens'.⁹ He describes the rites to be observed on the occasion of church and state celebrations with great affection and care. Each act of ceremony, gesture, word, acclamation and hymn is recorded in detail, for every detail has an underlying symbolic meaning—the outcome of a coherent ideology, and everything points towards one single aim—the mystical glorification of the emperor.

Everything that surrounds the emperor inspires awe. The palace itself in which the Christ-loving emperor lives is under divine protection, and his subjects consider it to be a holy place; the same solemn stillness reigns in it that was once observed in the presence of Divus Augustus, the Roman god-emperor. Everything is performed in awe-inspiring silence, not a single superfluous word is spoken, no unnecessary noise is allowed to break the solemnity of the moment when the emperor appears before his people.¹⁰

Every time the emperor appears his subjects throw themselves to the ground and touch it with their brows. This is the custom of prostration (*προσκύνησις*) that was taken over by the Byzantine ceremonial, together with many other forms of ritual, from the Roman-Hellenistic cult of the sovereign.¹¹ All the emperor's subjects, including even the highest dignitaries of the empire and the members of the imperial family greet the emperor by prostration, because all of them without distinction are his slaves (*δοῦλοι*).

Although all the subjects are considered slaves of the emperor, this does not mean that they are equals among themselves. According to their respective official positions, some of them have a higher station than the others, or, which is the same and constitutes the most important point, they stand nearer to the sacred person of the emperor. This gave rise to the formation of a hierarchical order of ranks which is specifically characteristic of the Byzantine state.

The imperial insignia and robes are invested with sacred meaning. Constantine Porphyrogenitus affirmed that the crowns and festive robes of the emperor were not made by the hand of man; according to old scripts, an angel brought them to Constantine the Great with

⁹ *De caerimoniis*, ed. Bonn., p. 3 sq.

¹⁰ Treitinger, *op. cit.*, pp. 52 ff.

¹¹ Treitinger, *op. cit.*, pp. 84 ff. Alföldi, *Zeremoniell*, pp. 46 ff.

the command that they should be kept in the cathedral of St Sophia and worn only on the most solemn occasions.¹² The colour of the emperor's robes is normally crimson, and they are heavily ornamented with gold. With these robes the emperor wears a diadem, which is the main symbol of imperial dignity, and crimson shoes. The symbolism of colours is a very important aspect of the Byzantine cult of the emperor. During his public appearances on solemn occasions the emperor never stands on the floor, but is placed on a special stool, upholstered with crimson stuff, on a podium, or on high marble steps. The emperor's hands may touch only crimson stuff or porphyry.¹³

Theocratic tendencies become more and more apparent in the life of the imperial court. Not only the Church but also the state celebrates a special liturgical service on every holiday. The court, all the government and military officials, the representatives of the people, praising the emperor with ceremonious acclamations, take part in this sumptuous mystery-play. This empire desires to be a reflection of the kingdom of God. The emperor takes Christ as a model and emulates his example, going even so far as to represent him at many church celebrations, at which Christ's life on earth is evoked.

According to a tradition which is recorded about 900, the emperor used to invite twelve guests to a meal on Christmas Day 'following the example of the twelve apostles'.¹⁴ In an Easter Day procession described in Constantine VII's Book of Ceremonies, 'the magisters and patricians take the places of apostles, while the emperor, so far as possible, imitates Christ'.¹⁵ In later times, the emperor performs the ceremony of the washing of feet on Maundy Thursday.¹⁶ Just as Christ had washed the feet of his disciples, so the emperor washes the feet of twelve poor men from his empire. The fact that poor men were selected for this tended to emphasise the Christian humility of the emperor. And this humility represented a new and most powerful source of spiritual elevation, for it was more important than all earthly grandeur that the emperor should follow the example of the Son of God, who became man, and imitate His humility.

The particular nearness of the emperor to God and the divine origin of his sovereignty imply the concentration of all authority in his hands. As the emperors were an emanation of divine power, it was bound to gather up the whole power on earth, and its authority could not be impaired by any other inner or outer force. Thus the

¹² *De adm. imp.*, ed. Moravcsik-Jenkins, cap. 13, l. 28 sq.

¹³ Cf. R. Delbrück, *Antike Porphywerke*, Berlin-Leipzig, 1932, pp. 11 ff., 27 ff. Treitingen, *op. cit.*, pp. 58 ff. Alföldi, *Insignien*, p. 51.

¹⁴ *Kletorologion of Philotheos*, ed. Bury, p. 157, 12.

¹⁵ *De caerim.*, ed. Bonn., p. 638, 3.

¹⁶ *Pseudo-Codinus*, ed. Bonn., p. 70, 10 sq.

absolute power of the Roman emperor was further increased with the advent of Christian ideas.

For we should not forget that the Christ-loving sovereign of Byzantium was a Roman emperor, and the empire that God had called him to rule was the Roman empire. The name 'Byzantine' is an expression coined in later times which was not known to those whom we now call 'Byzantines'. They have always, quite consciously, called themselves 'Romans'; their capital was for them the new Rome; their emperors were the successors of Roman emperors. Throughout its history, the Byzantine empire holds on obstinately to its right of succession to Rome. The inheritance of Rome, like the belief in the divine origin of imperial power, represents a special source from which the conception of the absolute power of Byzantine emperors and their high claims on the world beyond the borders of their empire is derived.

The emperor and omnipotent ruler of the Romans will be the leader of all the world and the guardian and protector of the Christian faith, because he is the only legitimate emperor on earth, being the Chosen of God and the successor of Roman emperors. The idea that there may be only one single legitimate empire is the basic principle, the alpha and omega of all Byzantine political doctrines. To the Byzantines, and also to all those living in the Middle Ages, this seemed as natural and incontestable as the belief that there could be only one true Christian Church.

Like the Roman empire, the Byzantine empire was at first a universal power, and since the time when the Romano-Byzantine domination of the world was shaken by the barbarian invasions, the empire struggled (and this constitutes the most fundamental aim of the state policies of the early Byzantine empire and the focal point of the attempt at restoration made by Justinian) first for the preservation and then for the re-establishment of its position as a universal power. All the countries that had once belonged to the Roman *orbis*, and later joined the Christian Church, were considered by the Byzantine emperors as their everlasting and incontestable possession. The real developments however undermined the validity of this proud claim. The world empire was in fact crumbling away, and its former components gradually acquired independence and tended to shake off the guardianship of the Roman successors in Constantinople. Political independence did not however mean equal standing with the empire. From the legal and ideological point of view, the Byzantine empire, as the sole legitimate empire on earth, had a more elevated position than all other countries, even when these enjoyed political independence and were growing more powerful than the empire itself. And so great was the suggestive power

of the Romano-Byzantine ideas that even rulers of independent countries recognised for a long time the ideal supremacy of the Byzantine emperor. They liked to have the Byzantine court titles which they obtained from Constantinople. They were thus incorporated in the Byzantine hierarchy, in which some of them held a higher and others a lower rank. The mediaeval countries were part of a complicated hierarchy of states: at the summit of this hierarchy stood the Byzantine sovereign, both in his quality of Roman emperor and as the head of Christendom. Just as in the earlier stages the Byzantine empire struggled to uphold its position as a universal power, so in later times it strove to maintain this ideal supremacy.¹⁷ For soon insubordination began to creep in.

With the further shifting of the balance of power, the ideal supremacy of the Byzantine empire was also jeopardised. Fully conscious of their power, other nations began to claim priority. The crowning of Charles the Great as emperor was the heaviest blow to the prestige of the Byzantine hierarchy of states.¹⁸ This action, which seemed to have upset the balance of the traditional hierarchy of states, was considered in Constantinople as the usurpation of the inherited right of the Byzantine empire. After some futile resistance Byzantium succumbed to the overpowering superiority of the adversary, and already in 812 recognised the imperial status of Charles the Great. Although this was a very high distinction and a tremendous concession on the part of the Byzantine empire, the imperial status of Charles the Great still appeared to the Byzantines as having a significance limited territorially and, in the long run, of transitional character, as opposed to their own universal Roman empire, which never surrendered in principle its claim to world sovereignty, and whose mission it was to reunite all Christian states in response to God's command. It is most significant that ever since the recognition of the imperial title of Charles the Great, the Byzantine emperors began more and more frequently and with more and more ostentation to call themselves not merely emperors, but emperors of the Romans, thus indicating the difference between the status of their empire and that of the West.¹⁹

The mediaeval idea of imperial authority is however in essence connected with the claim to the Roman succession, and while Charles the Great himself, consciously trying to avoid the emphasis on the Roman character of his emperorship, contented himself with the

¹⁷ Cf. Ostrogorsky, *op. cit.*, pp. 41 ff.

¹⁸ On this most discussed problem cf. especially Dölger, 'Europas Gestaltung im Spiegel der fränkisch-byzantinischen Auseinandersetzungen' in *Byzanz und die europ. Staatenwelt*, pp. 282 ff.

¹⁹ Cf. E. Stein, 'Zum mittelalterlichen Titel "Kaiser der Römer"', *Forschungen und Fortschritte*, 1930, pp. 182 f. Dölger, *op. cit.*, pp. 305 ff.

title 'Imperium Romanum gubernans', the later Western emperors insisted most emphatically on the Roman origin of their imperial status, thus entering into open conflict with the Byzantine empire.²⁰ The twofold question—to whom did the imperial status actually belong and who was entitled to inherit Rome—divided minds for centuries in East and West and gave rise to many desperate conflicts. In these circumstances, the Byzantines often contested even the claim of the Western emperors to the title of emperor in general, particularly as the break-up of the kingdom of the Carolingians helped to commit the earlier explicit recognition to oblivion. In fact, the Western rulers were never recognised by the Byzantines as Roman emperors proper. This was however the main issue in the struggle for the leading position in the hierarchy of states, as only the Roman emperor had a claim to universality.

Already at the beginning of the 10th century the hierarchical order of Christian states defended by the Byzantine empire suffered a new blow. It was the turn of the Bulgarian ruler Simeon (893–927), who had grown extremely powerful. He stretched out his hand for the imperial crown, claiming the leading position in the hierarchy of states. For Simeon, who had grown up in Byzantium and whom the Byzantines called a half-Greek, was also absolutely convinced that there could exist only one single empire—the universal Roman empire. He aimed, accordingly, not at founding a national Bulgarian empire alongside Byzantium, but at substituting a new empire of universal significance for the old Byzantine empire.²¹ His daring claim was not limited to the title of Basileus of the Bulgarians; he demanded the status of Basileus of the Romans either with or without the addition of 'and of the Bulgarians'.²² In spite of the tremendous pressure which he brought to bear, Byzantium did not recognise his claim; it could not do so, as it did not wish to surrender. In 927 however the Byzantine government, forced to make concessions, ceded, with the hand of a Byzantine princess, the title of Basileus of the Bulgarians to Simeon's more tractable son Peter. This was, once more, a very considerable concession, which meant great promotion for Bulgaria in the hierarchy of states. The Byzantine empire managed however to defend its supremacy against the powerful Bulgarian empire, because the territorially limited Bulgarian kingdom lacked the main characteristic of a true empire, viz. the universality inherited from Rome.

²⁰ Cf. P. E. Schramm, *Kaiser, Rom und Renovatio*, I, Leipzig, 1929, pp. 12 ff., 83 f.

²¹ Dölger, 'Bulgarisches Zartum und byzantinisches Kaisertum' in *Byzanz und die europ. Staatenwelt*, pp. 140 ff. Ostrogorsky, 'Die Krönung Symeons von Bulgarien durch den Patriarchen Nikolaos Mystikos', *Bull. de l'Inst. archéol. bulgare* 9 (1935), pp. 275 ff. and 'Avtokrator i samodržac', *Glas Srpske akad. nauka*, 164 (1935) pp. 121 ff.

²² T. Gerasimov in *Bull. de l'Inst. archéol. bulgare*, 8 (1934), pp. 350 ff. has published a seal of Simeon with the significant legend: Συμεών ἐν Χριστῷ βασιλεὺς Ῥομῶν.

A similar crisis in the Byzantine idea of emperorship arose in the 14th century, when the predominance in south-eastern Europe of the Serbian ruler Stephen Dušan (1331–55) began to make itself felt. Like Simeon of Bulgaria, Stephen Dušan also lived in the Byzantine world of ideas, and his political thinking was also based on the theory of a single world empire. This is why he too did not strive for the foundation of a Serbian empire beside the Byzantine empire, but wished to replace it by a Graeco-Serbian empire of his own creation. He was also not content with the title of Serbian emperor, but assumed the prodigious title of 'Emperor and Sovereign of Serbia and Romania'.²³ The wars that this powerful Serbian ruler waged in order to strengthen his claim brought the Byzantine empire to the verge of ruin, but again the old empire held out and overcame the grave crisis without abandoning its high ideals.

The most striking and, perhaps, the most significant aspect of this struggle for spiritual and political supremacy was the fact that both the attacking young powers and the old empire on the defensive were imbued with the same ideology. For neither the Roman emperors of the German nation nor the South Slavonic tsars had ever opposed the principle of the hierarchy of states. This principle remained inviolable also for them, and the rival rulers actually fought for a higher position within the same hierarchy, in the first place for that of emperor.

In reality however this struggle for the highest position led to the division of the Christian world and also, however much it was contrary to the political ideology of all the participants in this struggle, to the formation of separate empires. On the one hand, the old Byzantine empire would not let the competing powers merely push it out of the way, and on the other hand, it no longer had the possibility of hindering the rise of new empires governed by independent rulers.

No one could show more contempt for facts when they contradicted theory than the Byzantines. When facts and beliefs contradicted each other beliefs prevailed. Byzantium has never admitted the existence of other empires and to the last moment preserved the belief that it was the only empire in the world. As late as in the last years of the 14th century, when the Byzantine empire was already lamentably weak and appeared to be on the very eve of its downfall, Antonius, patriarch of Constantinople, deemed it his duty to remind the Muscovite ruler, Prince Vasily I, of the doctrine of a single world empire. For Vasily had forbidden the traditional mention of the Byzantine emperor in Russian church services, because, as he said,

²³ Cf. M. Dinić, 'Dušanova carska titula u očima savremenika', *Žbornik u čast šeste stogodišnjice Zakonika cara Dušana*, Beograd, 1951, pp. 87 ff.

Russia had a church, but no emperor, and would not recognise him. The doctrine of a single emperor uniting all Christians was never expounded with more eloquence and persuasive force than in this letter, which was sent by the patriarch to Moscow from a Constantinople already besieged by the Turks. It was, moreover, addressed to the same Prince Vasily who had been constantly approached by the Byzantines with solicitations for help and financial support for the Christian brethren in Constantinople, 'who were languishing in need and distress in the city besieged by the Turks'.²⁴ The patriarch enlightens the Russian prince on the high position of the emperor within the Church, stating that he cannot be compared to other princes and rulers. 'And even though it is God's Will that heathens are now besieging the emperor's domain, he receives, to the present day, the same consecration, the same honours and the same prayers from the Church and is anointed with the same Holy Myrrh and ordained as emperor and autocrat of the Romans, which means of all Christians. . . . This is why it is not at all good, my son, when thou sayest: "we have a church, but no emperor". For emperorship and Church constitute one integral entity and it is quite impossible to separate them from each other. . . . Listen to what the Prince of Apostles, Peter, says in his first epistle: "Fear God, revere the emperor." He did not say "the emperors", so that nobody could surmise that he meant the so-called emperors of certain nations, but "the emperor" in order to show that there is only one emperor in the world. . . . When certain other Christians assumed the emperor's title, this came to pass in contradiction to the natural order of things and to the laws, through the imposition of tyranny and violence'.²⁵

There existed, of course, an obvious discrepancy between the requirements derived from the doctrine of the emperor of all Christians and the actual trend of historical events. This discrepancy only increased with passage of time, as the Christian world showed a growing tendency to break up, the power of the old empire declined, and other nations began to grow more and more independent and to gain greater power. It would however be a mistake to believe that the claims connected with the imperial title were of purely theoretical character. The emperor possessed manifold and very important prerogatives which nobody would or dared to dispute; and this is not the least important explanation of the bitter struggle for the possession of imperial status.

Just how forcibly and demonstratively the Byzantine emperors made valid their claim to sovereignty over the whole world is shown very clearly by the peculiar form in which, up to the 13th century,

²⁴ *Polnoye sobraniye russk. letopisey*, 11 (1897), p. 168.

²⁵ Miklosich et Müller, *Acta et diplomata graeca*, II, p. 190 sq.

all the agreements concluded by the Byzantine emperors with rulers and governments of other countries were expressed. An agreement with a foreign power, in the true sense of this word, was for the first time concluded by the Byzantines in 1261. This was the memorable Nymphaeum agreement which Michael VIII Palaeologus concluded with Genoa a short time before Constantinople was reconquered. All the earlier agreements of the Byzantine empire with foreign powers were not real agreements, viz. such as are usually concluded by partners enjoying equal rights, but unilateral documents bestowing the emperor's grace. Even when the conditions stipulated in the agreement were very burdensome and perhaps humiliating for the empire, the agreement was drawn up in the form of a privilege granted by the emperor. The emperor granted certain rights to a foreign ruler or to a foreign country and signed the document alone, as a gracious donor. On such occasions, moreover, he made use of the traditional form of *Chrysobullos Logos*, the stately donation charter provided with a gold seal, such as were also granted to the subjects of the empire when a gift or a privilege was being bestowed on one of them.²⁶ Even when the empire had to pay a tribute to some overpowering adversary, these payments were represented as gifts of the emperor to the 'peoples' concerned.

The granting of titles and insignia to foreign princes is comprised within the same mode of thought. Just as the power of the emperor was the outcome of Divine Power, so any other authority on earth was the outcome of imperial authority. For this reason the Byzantine emperor assumed the right of confirming foreign princes in their sovereign rights by transmitting to them their royal insignia. An example of this procedure is the lower part of the holy crown of Hungary received by the Hungarian king Geyza I (1074-7) from the Byzantine emperor Michael VII Ducas. The effigies and inscriptions appearing on this insignium provide a fine illustration of the Byzantine system of the hierarchy of states with its sharp differentiation of ranks. The effigy of the emperor occupies a central position and is above Geyza's likeness, which is placed on the same level and in symmetrical apposition to the picture of the co-emperor Constantine. The Hungarian king however is not made equal in rank with the Byzantine co-emperor either. Both Byzantine rulers, the emperor and the co-emperor, are represented with a halo, while the Hungarian king appears without it; both emperors hold the *labarum*, while the Hungarian king holds only a cross; the plain clothing and headgear of the Hungarian king are also in strong contrast with the magnificent robes of the two emperors. A further very characteristic

²⁶ Treitinger, *op. cit.*, p. 211. Dölger, 'Die Kaiserurkunde der Byzantiner als Ausdruck ihrer politischen Anschauungen' in *Byzanz und die europ. Staatenwelt*, pp. 9 ff.

detail: in the inscription the names and titles of the two emperors are in red letters and those of the Hungarian king in blue. Clearly, the recognition of his royal status by Byzantium meant a considerable elevation in the hierarchy of rulers, and yet a great difference still lay between the *κράλης Τουρκίας*, as the Hungarian king was named, and the *βασιλεὺς Ῥωμαίων*, as the Byzantine emperor and co-emperor were styled: this differentiation in rank is emphasised with incomparable clarity by the holy crown of Hungary.²⁷

The forms of address used by the emperor's office in correspondence with foreign rulers, which are quoted in Constantine VII's Book of Ceremonies, will give us an idea of the complicated nature of the Byzantine system of the hierarchy of states.²⁸ These forms vary in accordance with the higher or lower position of the addressee within the hierarchy of rulers. On the lowest step stood the rulers of the numerous dependent states to whom the emperor issued orders (*κελεύσεις*). To the princes of independent states the emperors sent letters (*γράμματα*). Yet there is also considerable differentiation among various independent sovereigns, and, accordingly, some of them are honoured with more distinguished titles and others with less important ones, just as some of them are mentioned with high-sounding predicates while others are given simpler ones; some rulers are given only one predicate, some two or even three, and some none at all.²⁹ Besides this, some of the princes are called 'friends' of the emperor, which is, without doubt, a reminiscence of the institute of 'amici principis'. In the time of Constantine VII, the princes of Egypt and India enjoyed the honour of this title. A still higher distinction for a foreign sovereign was to be styled 'spiritual relative' of the emperor. Thus the rulers of Bulgaria, Great Armenia and Albania were called 'sons' of the emperor. Finally, on a still higher level stood the German and French kings who were addressed as 'brothers' of the emperor. From this last tradition originated the institution of the family of kings, which has been upheld up to the most recent times.³⁰

²⁷ The correct reading of the inscriptions of the Hungarian crown was given by Gy. Moravcsik, 'A magyar Szent Korona görög feliratai' (with a French summary: 'Les inscriptions grecques de la Sainte Couronne hongroise'), *Értekezések a Nyelv- és Széptudományi Osztály Köréből*, XXXV, 5 (1935), pp. 131-80. Cf. also J. Moravcsik, 'The Holy Crown of Hungary', *The Hungarian Quarterly*, 4 (1938), pp. 656-67. On the historical and ideological significance of this insignium cf. Grabar, *op. cit.*, pp. 15 ff., Ostrogorsky, 'Staatenhierarchie', pp. 59 f., Treitinger, *op. cit.*, pp. 203 f., Dölger, 'Ungarn in der byzantinischen Reichspolitik', *Archivum Centro-Orientalis*, VIII, 3-4 (1942), pp. 19 f.

²⁸ *De caerim.*, ed. Bonn., pp. 686 sq.

²⁹ For more details see Ostrogorsky, 'Staatenhierarchie', pp. 49 ff.

³⁰ Cf. Dölger, 'Die "Familie der Könige" im Mittelalter' in *Byzanz und die europ. Staatenwelt*, pp. 34-69, and 'Die mittelalterliche "Familie der Fürsten und Völker und der Bulgarenherrscher', *ibid.*, pp. 159-82. In the first paper (p. 41) Dölger states that the 'spiritual son' had a higher rank in the hierarchy than the 'spiritual brother', while in his second paper (p. 167) he adopts the opposite view, which is of course the only correct one.

Thus a system of spiritual parentage was built up beside the hierarchy of rulers. This was done with the same end in view, namely to extol the emperor and to emphasise his supremacy over all other rulers. As bearer of the highest ruler's title and as head of the oldest Christian empire, the Byzantine emperor held the supreme position within the hierarchy of rulers and also stood as the father of all Christian peoples at the head of the family of kings. The human qualities and the age of individual rulers were naturally enough of no consequence in such a system: it might happen that the spiritual father was a helpless child and the spiritual son a mature and powerful ruler, as was the case with Constantine Porphyrogenitus and Simeon of Bulgaria, who was forty years the emperor's senior. The system of parentage established among the rulers was significantly transferred to the peoples they ruled: thus it was sometimes maintained that the Bulgarians were the spiritual sons of the Byzantines.³¹ The superior rank of the ruler provided a correspondingly superior position for the country represented by him, the hierarchy of rulers was at the same time the hierarchy of states.

The position of every ruler and country within the hierarchy was not, of course, fixed with absolute precision and, in time, it could be considerably altered. With the increase of the power and prestige of a ruler, not only his titles but the degree of spiritual parentage relating him to the Byzantine emperor could be changed. In earlier times, the kings of the different German tribes were considered as sons of the Byzantine emperor. The title of the emperor's brother was, in the early Byzantine epoch, enjoyed only by the Persian king. Charles the Great was granted the title of the emperor's brother when his imperial status was recognised. Since that time, his German, French and Italian successors were called brothers of the Byzantine emperor.³² In the 12th century, English kings were, on the other hand, still called only friends of the Byzantine sovereign, for they appeared on the Byzantine horizon much later than the others and very rarely had dealings with the Byzantine empire.³³

There always remained a distance however between the Byzantine emperor and the rest of the rulers, even when they were spiritual relatives of the emperor and linked as well to the imperial house by actual family ties. When, during the second crusade, the German king Conrad III met the emperor Manuel I, his brother-in-law and spiritual brother, it was required of him to kiss the emperor's knees, but he refused to comply with this.³⁴ The conception of the unity of

³¹ Dölger, 'Der Bulgarenherrscher als geistlicher Sohn des byzantinischen Kaisers' in *Byzanz und die europ. Staatenwelt*, pp. 183 ff.

³² Dölger, 'Die "Familie der Könige"', pp. 43 ff.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 38, n. 8.

³⁴ Cf. W. Ohnsorge, '"Kaiser" Konrad III', *Mitt. d. österr. Inst. f. Gesch.*, 46 (1932), pp. 343 ff.

the world and of the supremacy of the emperor over everything on earth tended to obliterate the difference between the foreigners and the actual subjects of the empire. It brought the foreign rulers in a certain degree to the same level as the Byzantine dignitaries. Both the former and the latter were incorporated in the system of hierarchy which culminated in the person of the emperor and owed him, according to Byzantine conceptions, the same expressions of esteem, graduated in accordance with their rank in the hierarchy.

The ambassadors of foreign countries and even foreign princes had to stand in the presence of the emperor, just as the Byzantine court dignitaries did, while the emperor was sitting on his throne. The right to sit in the presence of the emperor was rarely and rather unwillingly granted to foreign princes, and even then they had to sit at a much lower level than the emperor. This did not, of course, suit everybody's taste and gave rise to comic incidents. It happened, for instance, that when the emperor Alexius I was receiving the crusaders, a bold Western knight sat down near the emperor, and when Baldwin of Boulogne tried to push him off his seat, muttered: 'look at this rustic that keeps his seat, while such valiant captains are standing round him'.³⁵ It goes without saying that the Byzantines regarded this 'barbarian's' behaviour as sacrilege. The Western knights themselves were petrified at the improper conduct of their comrade, and one of the most distinguished among them enlightened the impudent warrior. The reverence for the ancient status of an institution was so deeply rooted in the hearts of men in the Middle Ages that even foreign princes themselves could not refuse to recognise the Byzantine emperor's claim to supremacy. Without this recognition, the Byzantine doctrine of the hierarchy of rulers would have remained a fine theoretical thesis and would never have become what it actually developed into, viz. a spiritual power which had the authority to impose its laws on the world.

One of the most beautiful illustrations of the hierarchy of rulers is provided by a contemporary description of the solemn entry of the emperor Manuel I into subjugated Antioch in 1159. The emperor, adorned with all the imperial insignia, was riding on horseback, and at a considerable distance the king of Jerusalem followed him, also on horseback, but without any adornment. The prince of Antioch walked on foot near the mounted emperor, holding on to the emperor's stirrup.³⁶ It could not be explained more clearly that there was a greater difference between the Byzantine emperor and the prince of Antioch, his vassal, than between the same Byzantine emperor and the king of Jerusalem, who was a 'crowned head';

³⁵ *Anna Comnena, Alexias*, ed. Leib, II, p. 229. English translation by E. Dawes, p. 264.

³⁶ *Cinnamus*, ed. Bonn., p. 187 sq.

and yet in this case too there existed an important and obvious difference of rank.

So, according to Byzantine conceptions, some rulers held a higher and others a lower rank within the hierarchy of rulers. But the highest rank was held by the Roman emperor in Constantinople, as the bearer of the highest title of sovereign, as the head of the oldest Christian empire, and as the father of all Christian peoples and the head of the family of rulers.

BYZANTINE CITIES
IN THE EARLY MIDDLE AGES

GEORGE OSTROGORSKY

This study is based on a paper delivered at the Symposium on "Byzantium in the Seventh Century" held at Dumbarton Oaks in May 1957.

The author is most grateful to Mr. John Parker for his translation of this paper.

AMONG the fundamental problems of Byzantine history it would be hard to name one that has been studied less than has that of the cities. This is not surprising in view of the extremely limited information about them to be found in the sources. Byzantine authors, with their attention steadily directed towards the capital and the imperial court, make comparatively few references to other towns, and when they do so it is, in the majority of cases, to mention them only in passing. The evidence provided by surviving official documents is likewise very sparse, and exists only for the later periods. Yet an understanding of the development and vicissitudes of urban life in Byzantium does, in many respects, provide a key to a better appreciation of the fortunes of the Empire itself; and this is especially true of the stormy period of the early Middle Ages.

For Byzantium the transition from the ancient to the medieval epoch was marked by a series of tremendous shocks, both internal and external. Its agonies at the turn of the seventh century are to some extent the pendant of those that preceded the fall of the Western Empire in the second half of the fifth. In the case of Byzantium, the established forms of imperial government were maintained, and the old political and cultural traditions lived on; none the less, the state went through the same profound crisis, the crisis of the entire Roman Empire, and overcame it only at the cost of abandoning a large part of its ancient heritage. So it was that during the seventh century the Byzantine Empire underwent far-reaching changes and emerged from these bearing substantially different traits. In the provinces new agrarian conditions came into being, and with them new social relationships. The old aristocracy of great landowners was, to a considerable extent, replaced by a growing class of small proprietors. It was a time which saw the formation of a new economic and social order, a new administrative system and a new military organization; in a word, a time in which, after the collapse of the old system, the renovation of the Byzantine state was accomplished.

It is natural to ask why Byzantium, despite all the upheavals through which it passed, and all the changes it underwent, was able to preserve its political structure and to survive the Roman Empire in the West by a thousand years. The answer usually given is that its economic wealth was greater, its rule stronger and more durable. But this, far from explaining anything, only raises further questions. Why was the Byzantine state stronger? What were the elements of its greater durability? What were the sources of its more ample wealth?

Any examination of the elements of continuity in Byzantine history must soon lead to a consideration of the development of Byzantine towns and of their position in the transitional period of the early Middle Ages. It will not, of course, be possible to present here any final solution of this complex and rarely studied problem, nor is it my intention to undertake a detailed and comprehensive investigation of Byzantine urban conditions during this epoch. My aim is a

more limited one; that is, merely to indicate in what way and by what methods such an investigation might be carried out.

In calling attention to the insufficiency of the literature about the history of Byzantine cities, I do not have in mind the fairly numerous and often very valuable studies dealing with the so-called *Book of the Prefect*, since such works are devoted only to Constantinople, and, furthermore to Constantinople in the tenth century. A work of greater scope is a most instructive little book by Bratianu, the first serious attempt to trace the development of Byzantine cities through the centuries.¹ In recent years a number of valuable investigations into the history of Byzantine towns have appeared in Soviet Russia, and fortunately some of them are devoted to the early Middle Ages^{1a}. Yet, in spite of the real merits of these works, the most important questions about the development of Byzantine towns still remain open. Such is the problem which here particularly concerns us: to what extent did the old cities survive the turbulent times of the early Middle Ages?

Learned opinion is sharply divided over this question. Some scholars believe that the late antique cities continued an uninterrupted existence into medieval times. This view is held by E.E. Lipšic and M. J. Sjužumov,² and was earlier advanced most emphatically by A. P. Rudakov, according to whom the Byzantine Empire, in the seventh century as in older times, was "an aggregate of cities (*poleis*)."³ Others, on the contrary, have concluded that there was a complete decline in the city life of Byzantium in the early Middle Ages. A. P. Každan,⁴ who takes this view, points out that the assumption of an uninterrupted development of Byzantine cities was based on evidence of intense urban life taken from sources either of the sixth century on the one hand, or of the tenth and following centuries on the other, whence it was deduced that a similar situation existed also in the early Middle Ages, about which our information is so scanty.

In the absence of direct evidence about the conditions of Byzantine cities in the early Middle Ages, scholars have turned to numismatic material. It is chiefly on this basis that Každan supports his conclusions about the decline of Byzantine cities from the seventh to the ninth century. With the help of the catalogues of the great coin collections, especially the one by Wroth of the British Museum collection, and the still more comprehensive catalogue of I. I. Tolstoy,⁵ Každan attempts first of all to establish certain data regarding the relative size of monetary issues in different periods of Byzantine history. He fully realizes

¹ G. I. Bratianu, *Privilèges et franchises municipales dans l'Empire byzantin* (Paris, 1936).

^{1a} We may note two important papers on the Byzantine city which appeared after the present study had gone to press: E. Kirsten, "Die byzantinische Stadt," *Berichte zum XI. Internationalen Byzantinisten-Kongress* (Munich, 1958); F. Dölger, "Die frühbyzantinische und byzantinisch beeinflusste Stadt," *Atti del 3º Congresso internazionale di studi sull' alto medioevo* (Spoleto, 1958), p. 1 ff.

² E. E. Lipšic, "K voprosu o gorode v Vizantii VIII-IX vv.," *Viz. Vrem.*, 6 (1953), pp. 113-31; M. Y. Sjužumov, "Rol' gorodov-emporiev v istorii Vizantii," *ibid.*, 8 (1956), pp. 26-41; "Problemy ikonoborčeskogo dviženija v Vizantii," *Učenyje zapiski Sverdlovskogo Gosudavstvennogo Pedagogičeskogo Instituta*, 4 (1948), p. 58 ff.

³ A. P. Rudakov, *Očerki vizantijskoj kul'tury po dannym grečeskoj agiografii* (Moscow, 1917), p. 71 ff.

⁴ A. P. Každan, "Vizantijskie goroda v VII-XI vekach," *Sovetskaja Archeologija*, 21 (1954), pp. 164-83.

⁵ W. Wroth, *Catalogue of the Imperial Byzantine Coins in the British Museum*, I and II (London, 1908); I. I. Tolstoy, *Vizantijskie monety*, I-IX (St. Petersburg, 1912-14).

the fortuitous element in the composition of every coin collection, and he duly emphasizes this. Yet, with all necessary reservations in mind, it must be admitted that the evidence of the collections, which number several thousand coins, is nevertheless significant.

On the basis of Wroth's catalogue, Každan gives the following statistics:⁶ from the time of Anastasius I to that of Maurice (491–602) the catalogue has 1,349 coins, i.e. an average of 12.3 coins per year; from Phocas to Constantine IV (602–685) 1,134, or 13.7 per year; from Justinian II to Michael II (685–829) however, there are only 423 coins, i.e. 2.9 coins per year; from Theophilus to Nicephorus II (829–969) there are 226, or 1.6 per year; from John Tzimiskes to Nicephorus III (969–1081) 283 coins or 2.5 per year, and from Alexius I Comnenus to Alexius III Angelus (1081–1195) 349 coins, that is, an annual average of 3.0.

Thus, from the end of the seventh century (and even, in fact, from the middle of that century) there appears to have been a drastic reduction in coin issues. Fundamentally the same picture is given by Tolstoy's catalogue, which is fuller but covers a shorter period.

Každan then goes on to discuss coin finds made in the course of excavations. As regards the cities of Greece, especially Athens and Corinth, such numismatic material has been adequately published and investigated.⁷ It shows in general a drastic diminution in the number of coins found dating from the middle of the seventh century onwards (this is especially clear at Athens).⁸ The subsequent increase in their number begins in the middle of the ninth century at Corinth, and not earlier than the second half of the tenth century at Athens. These facts have already been the subject of a number of investigations, and have provided material for some controversy.⁹

On the other hand, there have been very few publications or studies of coin finds made in Asia Minor. This is unfortunate, since such material, assuming the validity of numismatic evidence for our purpose, would have much greater importance for the history of Byzantine cities. The decline of the cities of Greece, even if we were to regard it as established by the above statistics, would not

⁶ Každan, *op. cit.*, p. 166.

⁷ Margaret Thompson, *The Athenian Agora. Results of Excavations Conducted by the American School of Classical Studies at Athens*, II: *Coins from the Roman through the Venetian Period* (Princeton, 1954); A. R. Bellinger, *Catalogue of the Coins Found at Corinth*, 1925 (New Haven, 1930); J. K. Finlay, "Corinth in the Middle Ages," *Speculum*, 7 (1932), p. 494; Katharine M. Edwards, "Report on the Coins in the Excavations at Corinth During the Years 1930–35," *Hesperia*, 6 (1937), p. 241 ff.; J. M. Harris, "Coins Found at Corinth. Report on the Coins Found in the Excavations at Corinth during the Years 1936–39," *Hesperia*, 10 (1941), p. 143 ff.; cf. also A. Bon, *Le Péloponnèse byzantin jusqu'en 1204* (Paris, 1951), p. 53; P. Charanis, "The significance of Coins as Evidence for the History of Athens and Corinth in the Seventh and Eighth Centuries," *Historia*, 4 (1955), pp. 165–6.

⁸ This diminution is not evident from the table given by M. Thompson, "Some Unpublished Bronze Money of the Early Eighth Century," *Hesperia*, 9 (1940), p. 73, note 33, which was used by Každan, *op. cit.*, p. 170, as the coins are there grouped by century, and only the sum total of all seventh-century coins is given. It can be clearly seen, however, in the excellent later publication of the same scholar (see previous note) which shows that a large number (232) of the coins of Heraclius was found in the Athenian Agora, and a still larger number (817) of Constans II's issues, but only very few of those of Constantine IV (30) and a quite negligible number of the coins of his successors (*op. cit.*, pp. 70–1).

⁹ Cf. Bon, *op. cit.*, and "Le problème slave dans le Péloponnèse à la lumière de l'archéologie," *Byzantion*, 20 (1950), p. 13 ff.; Charanis, *op. cit.*, p. 163 ff.

necessarily imply that all cities of the Empire suffered a similar fate. However, in the few cases from Asia Minor where we do have the necessary data at our disposal—as, for example, at Pergamum, Sardis, and Priene—we obtain, in general, the same picture: a fairly large number of coins of the sixth and first half of the seventh century (to Constans II inclusive), and a very small number, or even a complete lack of coins in the second half of the seventh century and later. Only at Pergamum is there further evidence of a considerable increase at the time of the Comneni.¹⁰

On the basis of the coin finds at Pergamum, their investigator K. Regling lost no time in sketching the historical development of that city and asserted that the material published by him exactly reflected its changing fortunes.¹¹ Essentially the same is done by Každan, admittedly on the basis of much more extensive material, but also drawing much wider inferences. It would seem, however, that the conclusions of his interesting article, which at first sight appear so convincing, are based upon a serious misunderstanding.

The crucial point is this: all the finds referred to above, both in Greece and Asia Minor, consist very largely, if not almost exclusively, of bronze coins. The marked decrease of their number, therefore, general as it was after Constans II, means only that, beginning with the middle of the seventh century, there was a cut back in bronze coinage, and not necessarily a diminution of all coin issues.¹² This becomes clear if we examine the collections of Byzantine coins with this reservation in mind. In compiling his statistics from the catalogues of Wroth and Tolstoy, Každan did not differentiate between the various kinds of coins, and therefore, did not notice that the decrease in the seventh and eighth centuries was limited to bronze, and that it did not affect the basic coinage, which was, of course, gold. If we make a count of the gold coins published in the same

¹⁰ Cf. K. Regling, "Münzfunde aus Pergamon," reprinted from *Blätter für Münzfreunde*, 1914 = *Pergamon*, I (1913), pp. 355–63, 329–36; H. W. Bell, *Sardis. Publications of the American Society for the Excavation of Sardis*, XI, *Coins*, I, 1910–14, (Leiden, 1916), p. 76ff.; K. Regling, *Die Münzen von Priene* (Berlin, 1927). See also S. McA. Mosser, *A Bibliography of Byzantine Coin Hoards* (New York, 1935), where various chance finds in a number of other towns in Asia Minor are briefly recorded. The finds of Byzantine coins at Antioch are also relevant to this subject. It would be natural to suppose that the Arab conquest had a great influence in determining their chronological distribution, yet we are confronted with the striking fact that here, too, coins of Constans II were found in fairly large numbers, while those of subsequent emperors down to the tenth century were completely lacking. See Dorothy M. Waage, *Antioch on the Orontes*, IV, pt. 2: *Greek, Roman, Byzantine and Crusaders' Coins* (Princeton, 1952).

A. P. Každan, *op. cit.*, p. 167f., included in his investigation coin finds made beyond the boundaries of the Empire, mainly relying for this purpose on the data given in Mosser's catalogue. On the basis of these data it is apparent that, both in the West and in the Eastern European countries, and in Scandinavia no less than in the Danubian regions, the number of Byzantine coin finds of the seventh century suddenly declines sharply everywhere, becomes still smaller in the eighth and ninth centuries, and increases once more in the tenth. But if we are to see in this an indication of the decline of Byzantine trade with other countries, or the adoption of a system of barter, we should not seek for all the causes of such a change only in Byzantium itself; even more compelling causes are certainly to be found in the conditions of those other countries.

¹¹ Regling, "Münzfunde aus Pergamon," p. 329.

¹² Každan, *op. cit.*, p. 172, points out that the only exception to the presumed general scarcity of coins from the eighth and ninth centuries is the find made at Lagbe in Pamphylia, where coins of precisely this period were discovered. But this seeming anomaly is easily explained: the hoard found here consisted of gold coins, which is indeed an unusual phenomenon. It contained 102 coins of all the Emperors from Leo III to Theophilus, those Emperors, that is, whose coins are so scarce in the ordinary bronze hoards. Cf. E. T. Newell, *The Byzantine Hoard of Lagbe* (New York, 1945).

catalogues, leaving aside both bronze and silver, we shall obtain very different results.

Wroth's catalogue will then give the following figures for gold coins:

From Anastasius I to Phocas (491-610) : 197, an average of 1.66 per year
 From Heraclius to Justinian II (610-711) : 380, an average of 3.76 per year
 From Philippicus to Irene (711-802) : 149, an average of 1.64 per year
 From Nicephorus I to Leo VI (802-912) : 95, an average of 0.86 per year
 From Alexander to Basil II (912-1025) : 45, an average of 0.39 per year
 From Constantine VIII to Nicephorus III (1025-1081) : 85, an average of 1.52 per year.

Let us now compare these figures with Tolstoy's catalogue which includes the data of Sabatier and Wroth and also provides material from his own collection and from the Hermitage. Here we have:

From 395 to 491: 250 gold coins, an average of 2.60 per year
 From 491 to 610: 241 gold coins, an average of 1.87 per year
 From 610 to 711: 595 gold coins, an average of 5.89 per year
 From 711 to 802: 213 gold coins, an average of 2.34 per year
 From 802 to 867: 91 gold coins, an average of 1.40 per year.

Thus, we observe from the above statistics that gold issues not only did not diminish in the seventh century, but on the contrary, increased significantly.¹³ I might not have insisted particularly on this fact and might have ascribed it to chance, which, of course, greatly influences the composition of every coin collection,¹⁴ had I not had the opportunity of becoming acquainted with the rich coin collection at Dumbarton Oaks, the principal part of which (the Hayford Pierce Collection) contains about half as many Byzantine coins as are to be found in the British Museum.¹⁵ It is most instructive to find that this Collection, when compared with the data in Wroth's and Tolstoy's catalogues, gives on the whole a similar picture of the coin issues in different epochs. Once more, it shows a strong falling-off in bronze coins after the reign of Constans II, and at the same time not only no reduction, but even an increase of gold coins in the seventh century, when compared to the previous epoch.

The figures are:

¹³ With regard to the number of gold coins, there is no difference to be observed between the first and second halves of the seventh century that would even remotely suggest a parallel to the very marked diminution, noted above, in the number of copper coins after Constans II. Wroth's catalogue lists 136 gold coins of Heraclius (a yearly average of 4.4), 103 of Constans II (= 3.81 per year), 47 of Constantine IV (= 2.76 per year), 71 of the two reigns of Justinian II (= 4.44 per year), and 33 of Tiberius Apsimar (= 4.7 per year). Tolstoy's figures are: Heraclius, 180 (= 5.8 per year), Constans II, 199 (= 7.37 per year), Constantine IV, 84 (= 4.94 per year), Justinian II, 82 (= 5.125 per year), and Tiberius, 50 (= 7.14 per year).

¹⁴ It is undoubtedly to chance that we should ascribe the very small number of gold coins of the ninth, and particularly of the tenth, century in the British Museum Collection.

¹⁵ In the table given below I have analyzed only this basic part of the Dumbarton Oaks Collection. Later acquisitions and smaller individual collections at Dumbarton Oaks are not included in the table. These would not, in fact, materially alter the general picture, since the composition of small collections is usually fortuitous and reflects the personal tastes and interests of the collectors.

From 491 to 610: 109 gold coins, an average of 0.99 per year
 From 610 to 711: 212 gold coins, an average of 2.1 per year
 From 711 to 802: 65 gold coins, an average of 0.71 per year
 From 802 to 912: 96 gold coins, an average of 0.87 per year
 From 912 to 1025: 70 gold coins, an average of 0.62 per year
 From 1025 to 1081: 152 gold coins, an average of 2.71. per year.

The Dumbarton Oaks Collection does not show the striking reduction of gold coins in the ninth and especially in the tenth century, that is found in the catalogue of Wroth. This confirms the view, expressed above, that the apparent reduction suggested by the British Museum figures is a matter of chance. We also find here, for the eleventh century, a greater increase of gold coins than that indicated by Wroth's material. But—and this is what most concerns us at present—the Dumbarton Oaks figures once more show a very marked increase of gold coins in the seventh century. This is a phenomenon that deserves the attention of numismatic scholars.

We do not know why it was that from the middle of the sixth to the middle of the seventh century so much bronze was issued, whereas from the second half of the seventh and the following centuries so little has been preserved, or why, for that matter, the minting of silver coins was so restricted in Byzantium. Further numismatic investigations may some day provide the answers to these questions, which still remain open.¹⁶ Perhaps it will be shown, among other things, what influence reminting had in preserving the currency of given periods. In any case, numismatic material can have only a secondary value in dealing with the problem that confronts us now, namely, the development of urban life and urban economy. Such evidence, however, far from supporting the theory of the decline of the Byzantine cities and urban economy in the seventh century, only confirms the continued existence of a monetary economy in Byzantium, a fact which is sufficiently documented by other sources.

We have, however, further evidence, also indirect, it is true, but much more reliable, which may shed some light on the existence of cities in early medieval Byzantium. First of all, there are lists of bishoprics existing at that time. It is well known that ecclesiastical organization was founded on the administrative organization of the Empire, which in turn was based on the city, the *polis*. Sees were naturally established in cities, and, as a rule, in every city of some importance. In Justinian's *Codex*, a law dating back to the time of Zeno proclaims, Πᾶσαν πόλιν . . . ἔχειν ἐκ παντὸς τρόπου ἀχώριστον καὶ ἴδιον . . . ἐπίσκοπον θεσπίζομεν.¹⁷ The episcopal list ascribed to St. Epiphanius always begins the enumeration of bishoprics in individual regions by indicating that such and such a metropolitan see had under it so many cities or episcopal sees (ἔχει

¹⁶ As one of the most distinguished of contemporary numismatists, A. R. Bellinger, has emphasized, the problem of the abundance or scarcity of the issues, "the basic question about imperial policy and the coinage" has so far received no answer. A. R. Bellinger, "The Coins and Byzantine Imperial Policy," *Speculum*, 31 (1956), p. 81.

¹⁷ *Cod. Just.*, I. 3.35.

ὕπ' αὐτὴν πόλεις ἦτοι ἐπισκοπὰς).¹⁸ The concept of a see thus coincided with that of a city.

This so called *Ecthesis* of St. Epiphanius, the most ancient of surviving *Notitiae episcopatumum*, belongs, according to Gelzer, to the time of Heraclius.¹⁹ Whether it was in fact drawn up under that Emperor or somewhat later,²⁰ it does not, unfortunately, provide any data which might help us to determine what sees did in fact exist within the confines of the Empire in the seventh century. As Gelzer himself has pointed out, this *Ecthesis* does not introduce any appreciable changes into the order that had been established under Justinian.²¹ An even less reliable source is the *Notitia episcopatumum* that is next in seniority, usually called the *Notitia* of Leo III.²² This is a compilation made from older lists, including, as if nothing had happened, provinces that had long been lost, and presenting, furthermore, instances of obvious negligence.²³ In a word, this *Notitia*, like many other documents of the same kind, does not reflect the real facts, and it would be a mistake to draw from it any conclusions about the number of cities actually existing on imperial territory at that time.²⁴

Quite different in character are the lists of bishops found in conciliar acts.

¹⁸ H. Gelzer, "Ungedruckte und ungenügend veröffentlichte Texte der *Notitiae episcopatumum*," *Abh. der Bayer. Akad. der Wiss.*, 21 (1901), p. 534f.

¹⁹ Gelzer, *op. cit.*, p. 545.

²⁰ If it is true that the town of Γορδοσέρβα in Bithynia, mentioned in this document (Gelzer, p. 538) owes its name to the settlement of Serbs in that province, it follows that this work can hardly have been composed as early as the time of Heraclius and must be referred to the reign of one of his successors. The first reference of certain date to this town is to be found in the acts of the Trullan Council of 692, one of the signatories of which was Ἰσίδωρος ἀνάξιος ἐπίσκοπος Γορδοσέρβων τῆς Βιθυνῶν ἐπαρχίας (Mansi, XI, 996 B).

²¹ Gelzer, *op. cit.*, p. 545.

²² Ed. C. de Boor, "Nachträge zu den *Notitiae Episcopatumum*," *Zeitschr. für Kirchengeschichte*, 12 (1891), pp. 519-34. Cf. E. Gerland, *Corpus Notitiarum Episcopatumum Ecclesiae Orientalis Graecae*, I, 1 (Kadiköy, 1931); G. Konidares, Αἱ μητροπόλεις καὶ ἀρχιεπισκοπαὶ τοῦ οἰκουμενικοῦ πατριαρχείου καὶ ἡ "τάξις" αὐτῶν, I, 1, *Texte u. Forschungen zur byz.-neogr. Philol.*, 13 (Athens, 1934). Unlike the *Notitia* of Pseudo-Epiphanius, this document includes the sees of Illyricum and must, consequently, have been composed some time after these had been placed under the Patriarchate of Constantinople. But this does not in any way prove that it dates from the reign of Leo III: it merely shows that it cannot be earlier than his reign if, as is generally thought, the separation of Illyricum from Rome took place in 733. However, according to V. Grumel, "L'annexion de l' Illyricum oriental, de la Sicile et de la Calabre au patriarcat de Constantinople," *Recherches de science religieuse*, 40 (1952), p. 191 ff., this separation took place under Constantine V. All of this, of course, does not exclude the possibility that this *notitia* originated at a still later date. The view of N. Bees, "Beiträge zur kirchlichen Geographie Griechenlands," *Oriens Christ.*, N. S. 4 (1915), p. 238, that this *notitia* was composed "sicher vor dem Slaveneinbruche in Griechenland und zwar vor dem J. 723," rests on an obvious misunderstanding of the facts. It is curious that Mgr. Sophronius (Eustratiades) who, apparently unaware of De Boor's Edition 1891, published the text of this *notitia* a second time (Νέα Σιδών, 26 [1921], pp. 556f., 577f.), considered it to be earlier than the *notitia* of Pseudo-Epiphanius, and referred it to the period before the Arab conquest.

²³ More than sixty years ago L. Duchesne ("Les anciens évêchés de la Grèce," *Mélanges d'archéol. et d'hist.*, 15 [1895], p. 379 ff.) made some very penetrating observations about this *notitia*. Cf. also V. Laurent, Byzantion, 7 (1932), p. 521.

²⁴ As, for instance, did A. P. Rudakov in his most useful book (*op. cit.*, p. 73), where he estimated the number of towns in the Empire during the seventh century on the basis of the *notitia* of Pseudo-Epiphanius. See the justified criticism of A. P. Každan, *op. cit.*, p. 165. It should be added, however, that the significance of the *Notitiae Episcopatumum* as historical sources, and in particular that of the so called iconoclast *notitia*, was also greatly over-estimated by those scholars who contributed so much to the understanding of documents of this kind, i.e., H. Gelzer, "Die kirchliche Geographie Griechenlands vor dem Slaveneinbruche," *Zeitschr. für wiss. Theol.*, 35 (1892), p. 419 ff.; E. Gerland, *op. cit.*; G. Konidares, *op. cit.*, esp. p. 3, not to mention Sophronius Eustratiades, *op. cit.*

Here we have, not compilations from older sources, but official lists of persons who represented their city-bishoprics at councils held at precisely known dates. Often we have both the official list of participating bishops and a list of their signatures confirming the conciliar decisions. At no time, of course, did all the bishops living at a given time take part in a council, so that these lists cannot give us an altogether complete picture. Besides, such lists as have come down to us have not always been preserved in a satisfactory condition, and a great number of synodal acts, including those of the seventh century, have not yet been critically edited. In spite of all these shortcomings, the lists of bishops to be found in conciliar acts constitute a source of first-rate importance and, generally speaking, of great reliability. If they do not provide a complete inventory of all the sees, they do at least enumerate a large number of them, often the great majority of the dioceses and towns existing within the imperial borders at a given time. A comparison of the lists of bishops present at councils, with their actual signatures—in which the possibility of inadvertent omission is very small and which are, for this reason, especially important—makes a mutual check possible and is of great help in correcting chance errors. These conciliar lists have often been used by historians in other connections,²⁵ but have not hitherto been exploited as evidence for the history of Byzantine towns.

For the study of Byzantine cities in the seventh century, the episcopal lists of the Sixth Oecumenical Council of 680 and those of the Quinisext or Trullan Council of 692 are of particular interest. To judge from our somewhat unsatisfactory editions, the acts of the former were signed by 174 bishops and those of the latter by 211, each of whom represented his own episcopal city.²⁶ These are very sizable figures, which cannot in any way be made to square with the supposed disappearance of Byzantine cities in the seventh century. Furthermore, they do not represent anything like the total number of all the episcopal cities existing at that time. This is especially evident from the different number of signatories who were present at two councils chronologically so close to each other. In addition, not only are many signatures found in the acts of 692 that are absent from those of 680, but also many sees were represented at the earlier council and not at the later one. Theophanes, although his figure may not be quite correct, asserts that 289 bishops were present at the Sixth Oecumenical Council,²⁷ i.e., over 100 more than in the preserved lists.

At any rate, the episcopal lists of 680 and 692, despite their incompleteness, do give us a valuable and wholly factual enumeration of episcopal cities existing on Byzantine territory at the end of the seventh century. The trustworthiness of these lists will become quite clear when we examine more closely the names of the cities mentioned therein and see how they differ from those mentioned in earlier documents of this kind.

²⁵ Cf. for instance F. Dvornik, *Les Slaves, Byzance et Rome au IXe siècle* (Paris, 1926), where the author makes extensive use of conciliar episcopal lists and also of the various *Notitiae Episcopatum* as sources for the history of ecclesiastical organization in the Slavic regions of the Balkans.

²⁶ Mansi, XI, 640–53 and 988–1005. Cf. Hefele-Leclercq, *Histoire des conciles*, III, 1 (1901), p. 508, 575.

²⁷ Theophanes, p. 360, 2.

Unfortunately, the acts of the previous council, the Fifth Oecumenical Council of Constantinople in 553, have come down to us in such a mutilated condition that they can be used for our purpose only to a limited extent.²⁸ A more dependable criterion for purposes of comparison is provided by the acts of the Fourth Oecumenical Council at Chalcedon in 451, which enumerate 340 bishops.²⁹ These acts may be supplemented in some cases by the episcopal lists of the Council of Ephesus in 431 which, though it was attended by a much smaller number of bishops, nevertheless affords evidence of a number of sees not found in the acts of Chalcedon,³⁰ and also by the signatures on letters of individual bishops in answer to the encyclical of Emperor Leo I in 458.³¹ Furthermore, we may use by way of comparison the enumeration of cities within the Empire in the well-known *Synecdemus* of Hierocles, probably composed in the early years of Justinian I,³² though it must be borne in mind that not all the towns cited by Hierocles were episcopal sees, so that the differences between his list and the episcopal lists of the conciliar acts are not always significant.³³

A comparison of the episcopal lists of 680 and 692 with earlier lists clearly shows the changes that had occurred in the intervening period. These changes cannot be attributed only to fortuitous circumstances, i.e. either to the absence of certain bishops from a given council or to omissions from the acts. The fundamental and really significant difference consists in the fact that the bishops of those regions which had been lost by the Empire in the first half of the seventh century, or in which Byzantine authority had, in fact, been suspended, either do not appear at all at the councils of 680 and 692, or appear in quite insignificant numbers. From the territories that had fallen under Arab domination only the three Oriental patriarchs themselves were represented, since, according to tradition, an oecumenical council was hardly possible without their participation. From the Balkan lands there was only a handful of metropolitans and bishops, largely from cities which, like Thessalonica and a few coastal towns of Thrace and Greece, had been able to survive the Slav invasion. At both councils the only city represented from the interior of the Balkans was Stobi.³⁴ It is curious that the representatives of the most important Balkan sees

²⁸ Mansi IX, 173f. Signatures of the bishops, pp. 389-96.

²⁹ E. Schwartz, *Acta conciliorum oecumenicorum*, II, vol. 1-6. All the episcopal lists found in the acts of this council are collected by Schwartz in his work "Über die Bischofslisten der Synoden von Chalcedon, Nicaea und Konstantinopel," *Abh. der Bayer. Akad. der Wiss., Philos.-hist. Abt.*, N. F. Heft 13 (1937), p. 15ff.

³⁰ E. Schwartz, *op. cit.*, I, 1, 2, pp. 55-64 and I, 1, 7, pp. 111-17 (lists of signatures). Cf. also I, 1, 2, pp. 3-7 and I, 1, 7, pp. 84-8 (lists of those present).

³¹ Mansi, VII, 523-622.

³² E. Honigsmann, *Le Synecdèmos d'Hieroclès et l'opuscule géographique de Georges de Chypre* (Brussels, 1939). For the date of composition see Honigsmann's introduction, p. 1 ff. The list of George of Cyprus, composed about 600, is unfortunately of no assistance as it has come down to us in a very incomplete form and the sections most relevant to this enquiry have been lost.

³³ The much-disputed question whether the *Synecdemus* of Hierocles is based upon ecclesiastical documents or upon secular and administrative sources is decisively answered by Honigsmann, *op. cit.*, p. 2 f. in favor of the second alternative.

³⁴ Mansi, XI, 673C and 993B. St. P. Kyriakides, *The Northern Ethnological Boundaries of Hellenism* (Salonica, 1955), pp. 22, 26, maintains that, in addition to Stobi, Serdica and Scupi remained uninterruptedly in Greek hands through the seventh and eighth centuries. In the case of Serdica he does not

mentioned in the acts of 692, namely, the metropolitans of Thessalonica, Heracleia, and Corinth, were not actually present at the Council, and that a blank space was left for their signatures, as was done also for the signatures of representatives from Rome, Sardinia, and Ravenna.³⁵ This might perhaps be explained as an intentional absence on the part of the metropolitans of Thessalonica and Corinth, who were at that time subordinate to the Roman church,³⁶ but this explanation cannot apply to the case of the metropolitan of Heracleia. In addition, the fact of being subordinate to Rome did not hinder the metropolitan of Gortyna in Crete from attending the council of 692 and signing its decisions as the representative of "all the synod of the Holy Roman Church."³⁷

As far as can be ascertained, only twelve bishoprics from the whole Balkan peninsula were represented at the Council of 680: Thessalonica, Heracleia, Corinth, Selymbria, Mesembria, Stobi, Byzae, Sozopolis, Panion, Argos, Athens, Lacedaemon. In 692 there are again twelve signatures, including the three metropolitan sees, the representatives of which, as I have said above, were not actually present, but the list is not identical with that of 680: Thessalonica, Heracleia, Corinth, Selymbria, Mesembria, Stobi, Uzusa, Ainos, Philippi, Amphipolis, Edessa, Dyrrhachium.³⁸ Of the eighteen Balkan provinces listed by Hierocles, only six (Europa, Rhodopa, Macedonia I, Macedonia II, Hellas, Epirus nova) sent a few individual representatives, while the cities of the remaining twelve provinces (Thracia, Haemimontus, Moesia II, Scythia, Thessalia, Epirus vetus, Dacia mediterranea, Dacia ripensis, Dardania, Praevalis, Moesia I, Pannonia) were not represented at all at either council. All those cities,

offer any evidence in support of this statement. For Scupi he refers to the signature of John, Bishop of Nova Justinianopolis in the acts of 692, but does not indicate the grounds for identifying Scupi, the modern Skoplje, with this town. To these two places he also adds Castoria, "which we know was Greek and used during Irene's reign as a place of exile for conspirators." (*op. cit.*, p. 26). This rests on the statement of Cedrenus, II, 24, 10, that Irene, prompted by the counsels of the logothete Stauracius, exiled the Patrician Theodore Camulianus, together with a number of other dignitaries, ἐν Καϊστορίῳ (i.e. *in quaestorio*), which Kyriakides simply altered to ἐν Καστορίῳ. Theophanes refers to the same Camulianus more clearly and in greater detail (whereas Cedrenus rather unsuccessfully abbreviates their common source)—and from his narrative it is clear that Camulianus was not sent to Castoria, but held under arrest in his own house (Theoph. 465, 6; cf. also 464, 23), and soon after that we find him occupying the position of *strategus* of the Armeniac theme (*ibid.*, 468, 24). The problem of Nova Justinianopolis, referred to above, deserves more serious study. It is remarkable that the bishop of this town should have signed the acts of 692 immediately after the patriarchs and before the representatives of all the most ancient and powerful metropolitan sees (see Mansi, XI, 989A). This unusual distinction, which was not to be repeated at any other council, suggests that the town in question enjoyed the special favor of Justinian II. In any event, it was not the Bithynian Nova Justinianopolis or Nova Justiniana, founded by Justinian I (see below, p. 57, n. 43). The bishop of the latter town also signed the acts of 692, together with the other bishops from Bithynia, and is very characteristically styled ἐπίσκοπος πόλεως νέας Ἰουστινιανῆς δευτέρως τῶν Βιθυνῶν ἐπαρχίας (Mansi XI, p. 996D).

³⁵ Mansi, XI, 928BC and 989AB.

³⁶ At the council of 680 (Mansi, XI, 640B and 641A) they both figure as vicars of the Roman see.

³⁷ Mansi, XI, 928C and 989B.

³⁸ The bishops from the islands are not counted here. But it is curious to see that at the council of 680 three representatives from Crete were present, and at that of 692, four. The church of Crete belonged to the diocese of Illyricum; its head, the Metropolitan of Gortyna, was present at both councils. In view of the extremely small number of representatives from Illyricum itself, this is striking and does not suggest that communication by sea was particularly difficult at that time. It was also probably by sea and not along the *Via Egnatia*, that the bishop of Dyrrhachium came to Constantinople in 692. He had not been present at the council of 680.

as also the majority of cities of the six poorly represented provinces, must either have disappeared or have been cut off from Constantinople.

When we compare next the towns of Asia Minor mentioned in the acts of 680 and 692, with those mentioned in the acts of preceding centuries or even in the very detailed list of Hierocles, we obtain a completely different picture. Here the majority of episcopal towns continued to exist and to send their representatives to Church synods. It is for this very reason that the councils of 680 and 692, in spite of the almost total absence of bishops from the Balkans, were nevertheless fairly well attended. The overwhelming majority of those present came from Asia Minor.

Even in the case of Asia Minor, of course, when the lists of the seventh century are compared with more ancient ones, they are not found to coincide completely, if for no other reason than that the representatives of all the bishoprics existing at a given time could not all have been present at any one council. However, the differences which we notice here are quite insignificant. In fact, when we compare the conciliar lists of the seventh century or even of later councils with the lists of the preceding centuries or with Hierocles', we are struck not by their differences, but by their similarity.

The degree of this similarity becomes very apparent in the tables given by Ramsay in his fundamental work on the historical geography of Asia Minor.³⁹ I shall quote only a few telling examples. In the province of Galatia II (Salutaris) out of the seven bishoprics represented at Chalcedon in 451, six appear at the councils of 680 and 692, i.e. all except for the insignificant town of Petenissus;⁴⁰ on the other hand, at both councils of the seventh century the bishop of Celanion was present, whereas this town was not represented at Chalcedon, but is mentioned by Hierocles.⁴¹ In Bithynia Hierocles lists sixteen towns (the list in the acts of Chalcedon is here quite incomplete): yet fourteen of them appear at the councils of 680 and 692, so that only two are missing, whereas there appear four new bishoprics,⁴² which were presumably—some of them certainly—founded in the intervening period.⁴³ Finally, the most amazing instance of continuity is the following: in the province of Paphlagonia, both Hierocles and the Councils of the fourth, fifth, and sixth centuries mention fourteen towns, and we find the same fourteen towns in the episcopal lists of 680, 692, and 787, and even in a number of *Notitiae episcopatum*.⁴⁴

Thus, while the great majority of Balkan bishoprics known to us from early Byzantine sources are absent from the episcopal lists of 680 and 692, the bishop-

³⁹ W. M. Ramsay, *The Historical Geography of Asia Minor* (London, 1890). Cf. the less exhaustive tables in A. H. M. Jones, *Cities of the Eastern Roman Provinces* (Oxford, 1937), pp. 510ff.

⁴⁰ On this town see Ruge in Pauly-Wissowa, *Realencyclopädie*, XIX (1938), p. 1127f.

⁴¹ Ramsay, *op. cit.*, p. 223.

⁴² Ramsay, *op. cit.*, table facing p. 197.

⁴³ Of these only Nova Justiniana—Nova Justinianopolis, Justinianopolis Mela, Nova Justinianopolis Gordi—appears in 553. Three others—Cadosia, Linoe, Gordoserbon—are unheard of before 680.

⁴⁴ Ramsay, *op. cit.*, ad p. 197. In some of his tables Ramsay does not provide data from the lists of 680 and 692, but conflates the lists of earlier councils with the lists of the Council of Nicaea in 787. This in no way diminishes the evidential value of his data for our purposes here. The strong resemblances between the lists of the fifth and eighth centuries for the provinces of Asia and Hellespontus are particularly notable: Cf. Ramsay, *op. cit.*, ad p. 104, and p. 152.

rics of Asia Minor continue for the most part to be represented. This fact is particularly interesting, since even in early Byzantine times the towns of Asia Minor were much more numerous than those of the Balkans and were always represented in much greater numbers than the latter at the early Councils. In the seventh century, after the collapse of Byzantine power in the Balkans, this long-established distinction became particularly marked. Our investigation into the fate of Byzantine cities in the early Middle Ages has thus completely confirmed our general view of the Byzantine Empire in the seventh century, as regards both Asia Minor and the Balkan peninsula.⁴⁵ Asia Minor continued to be covered with a network of cities, as in earlier times.

It might, of course, be asked whether some of the bishops who attended Councils were not titular dignitaries, whose sees had in fact ceased to exist, and who lived on a pension either in the capital or in other dioceses. This question has already been raised—very justifiably—about the bishoprics of the Balkan peninsula.⁴⁶ We may suspect, for example, that Bishop Andrew of Amphipolis, who was present at the Council of 692,⁴⁷ and perhaps the Metropolitans John and Margarites of Stobi, present at the Councils of 680 and 692,⁴⁸ were such titular bishops, since neither for that time nor for later periods do we have any positive evidence about the existence of their sees.⁴⁹ There can be no possible doubt, however, in connection with the cities of Asia Minor which, for the most part, are otherwise attested, and the representatives of which reappear at the Councils of the eighth and ninth century.

If we go further, and compare the episcopal lists of the Councils of 680 and 692 with those of later councils, we shall see that by the time of the Seventh Oecumenical Council held in Nicaea in 787, the number of episcopal cities in the Byzantine Empire had increased considerably. 319 bishops are recorded as having been present at this assembly.⁵⁰ This imposing number not only emphasizes the fact that the attendance of bishops at the Councils of 680 and 692 was by no means complete, but also bears witness to the foundation of new sees. According to Theophanes 338 bishops attended the iconoclast council of 754.⁵¹ We do not, of course, possess any lists of those who participated in this council, but taking into account the similar number of bishops at Nicaea in 787, the figure given by Theophanes does not seem unrealistic and he certainly had no reason to exagger-

⁴⁵ Cf. G. Ostrogorsky, "The Byzantine Empire in the World of the Seventh Century," *supra*, pp. 3 ff.

⁴⁶ Cf. Fanula Papazoglu, "Eion-Amfipolj-Hrisopolj," *Zbornik radova Viz. inst. Srpske akademije nauka*, 2 (1953), p. 14.

⁴⁷ Mansi, XI, 993B.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 645A and 993B.

⁴⁹ Such suspicions are particularly well grounded with regard to Amphipolis, in place of which the town of Chrysopolis is later found. Cf. F. Papazoglu, *loc. cit.* In the case of Stobi, which was represented at the councils of 680 and 692 by two different persons (from which it follows that the second of them, Margarites, was appointed after the earlier council), it is not possible to be so categorical. Archaeological investigation has shown that the town's most flourishing period was from the fourth to the sixth century; there are no signs of building activity after this, but certain monuments of painting and sculpture are referred to a later date, though only tentatively, by the investigators of the site. Cf. E. Kitzinger, "A Survey of the Early Christian Town of Stobi," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 3 (1946), pp. 81-161.

⁵⁰ See their signatures in Mansi XIII, pp. 380-97.

⁵¹ Theoph. 427, 30.

ate the numerical strength of this iconoclast gathering. In iconodule circles it was maintained that the Emperor Constantine V had founded new bishoprics so that, by appointing his own partisans to them, he would be able to increase the strength of the iconoclasts at the council. There is probably some truth in this accusation, but this was certainly not the only motive for founding new sees. In any case, they were not all established in mere villages, and their foundation presupposes the existence of a corresponding number of towns, small though these may have been.

A study both of the acts of the Nicene Council of 787, and of those of the councils held in Constantinople during the ninth century—the anti-Photian assembly of 869 and more particularly the Photian Synod of 879⁵²—shows that new sees had also been founded in considerable numbers in the Balkan peninsula. Gradually consolidating its very shaky position in this area, the Byzantine government built new towns or revived old ones, wherever it succeeded in strengthening its position and, in consequence, it founded new sees. As early as the Council of 680 the bishops of the towns of Panion,⁵³ Mesembria⁵⁴ and Sozopolis⁵⁵ had appeared, and present at the Council of 692 were those of Edessa,⁵⁶ Uzusa⁵⁷ and Ainos⁵⁸—places where, as far as can be seen, no bishoprics had previously existed. A whole series of new Balkan sees appears in the acts of 787, mainly situated in Thrace and, to a considerably lesser extent, in Greece.⁵⁹

⁵² Mansi, XVI, 189–95, and XVII, 373–7.

⁵³ Mansi, XI, 643B. Hierocles (ed. Honigmann 632, 5) mentions Πάνιον among the towns of the province of Europe, but no bishops of such a see are to be found at the councils of the fifth or sixth centuries. Considering the proximity of this town to the capital, it would seem that its omission cannot have been fortuitous. The town, indeed, was not represented in 692; but at the council of 787 its bishop was once more in attendance. (Mansi, XIII, 388C).

⁵⁴ Mansi, XI, 653C. This town is not mentioned by either Hierocles or in the acts of the earlier councils. It figures, however, in the episcopal lists of not only 680, but 692, 787, and 879.

⁵⁵ Mansi, XI, 645C and 653C. Peter, Bishop of Sozopolis, signed the decisions of this council, and, for some reason, did so twice. Subsequently, the bishops of Sozopolis took part in the councils of 787 and 879. Sozopolis does not figure in Hierocles or in the episcopal lists of the Council of Chalcedon. But the acts of the Council of Ephesus in 431 were signed by Ἀθανάσιος ἐπίσκοπος τῆς κατὰ Δουῆτον καὶ Σωζόπολιν ἁγίας . . . ἐκκλησίας (E. Schwartz, *Acta conc. oecum.*, I, 1, 2, p. 62, n. 160) who was probably bishop of both Develtus and Sozopolis; it seems that at this time the rights of the bishop of Develtus, who is also found in the acts of 451 (and later in those 787 and 879) also extended over Sozopolis, which was not yet an independent see.

⁵⁶ Mansi, XI, 993B: Ἰσίδωρος ἐλάχιστος ἐπίσκοπος Ἐδεσσηνῶν πόλεως. It is obvious that the Macedonian Edessa (Voden) is referred to here, since the signature of its bishop is immediately preceded by those of the Bishops of Philippi, the Island of Lemnos and of Amphipolis, and is followed by that of the Bishop of Stobi. Edessa is listed by Hierocles (Honigmann, 638, 8), but does not appear in the episcopal lists of the councils of the early Byzantine period.

⁵⁷ Mansi, XI, 992B: Γεώργιος ἐλάχιστος ἐπίσκοπος Οὐζούσης τῆς Θρακῶν χώρας. The name of this town may not be given here correctly. Its identification presents a difficult problem, unless we assume that it was Ostudizus, which was the same as the Thracian Nicaea or Nice. (Cf. C. Jireček, *Die Heerstrasse von Belgrad nach Constantinopel und die Balkanpässe* [Prague, 1877], pp. 49 and 100). Nicaea-Nice is found in Hierocles and in the conciliar lists of the eighth and ninth centuries: see note 59 below.

⁵⁸ George, Bishop τῆς Αἰνιτῶν πόλεως Θρακῶν χώρας (Mansi, XI, 992E) is probably to be identified as a bishop of Ainos. The town was known to Hierocles (Honigmann, p. 634, 5), but does not appear in the ancient lists of sees. Its bishop took part in the council of 879.

⁵⁹ A list of these towns follows here, but we cannot vouch for its completeness, since any indication that might facilitate the work of identification is almost never found in the episcopal lists of this council. For convenience the towns are grouped under the metropolitan sees to which they are assigned in the *Notitia episcopatum* of the time of Leo VI. (H. Gelzer, *Ungedruckte und ungenügend veröffentlichte Texte der Notitiae episcopatum*, p. 549ff). Directly subject to the Patriarchate of Constantinople:

Among them are towns which, apparently, are mentioned only in conciliar lists and *notitiae episcopatum*, but there are also others whose names are well known in Byzantine history, such as Rhaedestus, Tzurullon, Apros, Bulgarophygon, Kallipolis, Monemvasia.⁶⁰

Besides these towns, some of which continue to feature in the acts of the councils of the ninth century while others do not, a very considerable number of new Balkan dioceses was represented at the Photian Synod of 879, and a number of these had earlier appeared in the acts of the anti-Photian Synod of 869. Once again these towns were situated mainly in the East of the peninsula. Some of them are scarcely known from other sources; other bore historic names.⁶¹

Neapolis (Christopolis, Kavalla), Derkos (Delkos, cf. Oberhummer, Pauly-Wissowa, IV, 2447), Nicaea; under the Metropolis of Heraclea in the province of Europe: Theodoropolis, Rhaedestus, Chersonesus, Chariopolis, Chalcis, Pamphylos, Lizica, Metrae, Tzurullon, Kallipolis, Apros, Koila (these last two are not in Leo's *Notitia*); under the Metropolis of Corinth: Monemvasia, Troezen, the Island of Aegina; under the Metropolis of Athens: Oreos (Histiaia, in Euboea), Porthmos (also in Euboea); under the Metropolis of Trajanopolis in the province of Rhodope: Anastasiopolis; under the Metropolis of Adrianople in the province of Haemimontus: Skopelos, Bulgarophygon. Not one of these towns is to be found in the episcopal lists of the preceding centuries (the same is true of the islands of Kephallenia, Zakynthos, and Kerkyra). Hierocles mentions Kallipolis, Apros, Koila, Nicaea, Porthmos, and Troezen (Honigmann, 633, 2; 634, 2, 3; 639, 3; 645, 7; 647, 1). The reading Νικάια is queried by Honigmann, while earlier editors gave it as Νικέδης, which version of the name is given by Constantine Porphyrogenitus, copying Hierocles (*De Thematibus*, 2, 35 ed. Pertusi). The acts of 787 confirm Honigmann's reading and so further bear out the fact that a town called Nicaea existed in Thrace. To distinguish this from the better known city of that name, which was the seat of the Council then taking place, the signature reads: Ἰωάννης ἀνάξιος ἐπίσκοπος Νικαίας τῆς Θράκης (Mansi, XIII, 388C). Cf. also Jireček, *Die Heerstrasse*, p. 100. It is evidently the same town which appears as ἡ Νίκη in the acts of the Council of 879 (Mansi, XVII, 373C), in the *Notitia episc. cod.* Paris. gr. 1555 A (ed. C. De Boor, *Zeitschr. für Kirchengeschichte*, 12 [1891], p. 525) and in the *Notitia episc. Leonis VI* (ed. Gelzer, p. 551, no. 71). Cf. Oberhummer, Pauly-Wissowa, XVII, 282 ff. s. v. Nike (Νίκη) and see above, note 57.

⁶⁰ Some very important bishoprics known to Hierocles and found in the conciliar acts of the fifth and sixth centuries, but not appearing in the acts of the seventh century, such as Adrianople and Arcadiopolis, or absent from the acts of both the sixth and seventh centuries, such as Develtus or Nicopolis in Epirus, also reappear at this time. Oberhummer, Pauly-Wissowa, X, 1659 s. v. Kallipolis, maintains that Kallipolis, though not represented at the First Oecumenical Council of 325, appears in all the subsequent councils. He does not refer to any conciliar acts in support of this statement, but only to various *Notitiae episcopatum* and—through a misunderstanding—to George of Cyprus. In fact Kallipolis, known to Hierocles (Honigmann, 633, 2) and heavily fortified by Justinian (Procop. *De aed.* ed. Haury, III, 2, p. 142, 22) does not figure in the acts of any council before 787, strange as this is. Nor does Theophanes mention it at all during the period with which this article is concerned. His only reference to it belongs to the year 450 (Theoph. 102, 26). Nicephorus does not refer to it either.

⁶¹ About one hundred bishops in all took part in the Council of 869 (cf. Mansi, XVI, pp. 189–95), whereas in 879 no less than 380 were present (Mansi, XVIII, pp. 373–9). In view of this, the list of those present at the later Council is of far greater interest. We shall excerpt from it those towns in the Balkan peninsula which do not appear in the earlier conciliar lists, once again giving no guarantee that these are absolutely correct or complete. No list of signatures has survived in the acts of this Council, and there is only the list of those who were present at the beginning of the first session. This document is not easy to use, and does not provide any clues that might assist in identifying the names given, so that the correct localization of the various towns is sometimes rather difficult. Here again we shall follow the division of the towns under metropolitan sees, as done in the *Notitia episcopatum* of Leo VI (towns which were represented at the Council of 869 are italicized). Archiepiscopal sees subordinate to the Patriarchate of Constantinople: *Rousion*, *Kypsele*, Hydros, *Messena*, Ganella, Brysis, Leukas, Roion; episcopal sees subordinate to the Metropolis of Heraclea: Madytos, Medeia; to Salonica: Dragouvitia, Kassandreia; to Athens: Euripos (Chalcis, in Euboea), the Island of Andros; the Metropolis of Patras and, subject to it, Methone; to Larissa: Pharsalos, *Zetounion*, Ezeron; to Naupactus: Joannina; to Philippopolis: Leuke, Joannitza, *Bukuba*; to Trajanopolis (the Metropolis of the province of Rhodope): Didymoteichos, Makre, Mosynopolis, Pora, Xanthia, Peritheorion; to Philippi: Kaisaropolis; to Adrianople: Trapobitzye, Bukellas, Probaton; to Dyrrachium: Stephaniaka;

A number of other important towns which, having featured in the conciliar acts of the fifth and sixth centuries, do not appear in those of the seventh and eighth are once more in evidence, such as Larissa (represented in 869), Demetrias, Naupactus, Trajanopolis and Anchialus.⁶²

It is impossible not to observe how close is the agreement between the lists of the Council of 879—and, to a lesser extent, those of 787—and the list of metropolitan sees, archbishoprics and bishoprics in the *Notitia* of Leo VI's reign. Naturally, only a part of the sees enumerated in the *notitia* was represented at the council. But the coincidences are none the less remarkable. The Balkan provinces most remote from Constantinople are sparsely represented in the acts as is to be expected. The provinces near the capital, such as Europe and Haemimontus were much more in evidence at the Councils of 787 and 879, and that of Rhodope was fully represented at the latter council, all eight bishops mentioned in the *notitia*, headed by their metropolitan, being present. This creates an impression that the lists in this *notitia* correspond fairly closely to the actual situation. This impression would be further strengthened if a similar comparison were to be made in the case of the provinces of Asia Minor. Thus—exercising all the caution required in dealing with this kind of document—it may be assumed that the lists of the *Notitia* of Leo VI reflect to a considerable degree the actual state of affairs. Therefore, it may be interesting to note that they enumerate no less than fifty-one metropolitan sees, forty-nine archbishoprics subject to Constantinople, 388 episcopal sees in Asia Minor and eighty-three in the Balkan peninsula, as well as twenty-nine in Calabria and Sicily, ten in Rhodes and five in Lesbos.⁶³

The conclusions we have reached on the basis of conciliar acts are fully corroborated by our narrative sources, meagre though they are. Let us consider the principal one, which is the Chronicle of Theophanes. In describing the events of the seventh and eighth centuries, Theophanes mentions a considerable number of towns in Asia Minor, albeit they are only those that happen to concern his narrative.⁶⁴ On the other hand, the number of Balkan towns mentioned by

the Metropolis of Nea Patras and, finally, Ochrida (which lay outside the imperial boundaries and is not mentioned in the *Notitia episcopatum* of Leo VI). Not one of these sees is mentioned in the conciliar episcopal lists of the preceding centuries, including those of Nicaea, 787. It should be noted, nevertheless, that the bishops of Patras, Messene, and Chalcis (Euripos) had signed letters in reply to the encyclical of the Emperor Leo I in 485 (cf. Mansi, VII, 612BC). Of these towns only Pharsalos, Mothone (= Methone) and Patras were known to Hierocles (Honigmann, 642, 13; 647, 17; 648, 3).

⁶² Of course, such absences could be entirely fortuitous. Thus, for instance, there is the striking fact that, after the Council of Chalcedon in 451, the representatives of Philippolis were not present at any council, including that of 879, when, as has been seen, three bishops subject to this metropolis attended.

⁶³ Gelzer, *Ungedruckte und ungenügend veröffentlichte Texte der Notitiae episcopatum*, pp. 550–559.

⁶⁴ We subjoin a list of the more important towns of Asia Minor mentioned by Theophanes in his Chronicle after the beginning of the seventh century. Cf. De Boor's excellent index and also the very useful one to the German translation of a part of the Chronicle by L. Breyer, *Bilderstreit und Arabersturm in Byzanz. Das 8. Jahrhundert (717–813) aus der Weltchronik des Theophanes*, Byz. Geschichtsschreiber, hrsg. E von Ivánka, Bd. VI s.a. (1957). Abydos, Adramyttion, Akroinon, Amasia, Amastris, Amida, Amorion, Ankyra, Antiocheia (Pisidiae), Ataleia, Caesarea, Chalcedon, Charsianon, Chrysopolis, Cyzicus, Dorylaion, Edessa, Ephesus, Germaniceia, Iconium, Martyropolis, Melitene, Mopsuestia, Myra, Nacoleia, Nicaea, Nicomedia, Pergamon, Perge, Prusa, Pylae, Samosata, Sardis,

him for this period is rather limited.⁶⁵ Many famous cities of the Balkan peninsula that figure in his narrative of the preceding period, such as Salona, Sirmium, Singidunum (Belgrade), Naissus (Niš), do not appear after the end of the sixth century. The towns of Asia Minor, on the other hand, cited by him for the early period continue, with a few fortuitous exceptions, to be mentioned later.

Každan tries to support his view of the complete decline of Byzantine cities in the early Middle Ages by a reference to Ibn-Khordādhbeh who, he claims, knows of only five cities in Asia Minor: Ephesus, Nicaea, Amorium, Ancyra and Samala (in addition to Nicomedia which lay in ruins).⁶⁶ In fact, Ibn Khordādhbeh refers to these cities by a word which his learned editor de Goeje translated as "ville," but he also gives for each theme he mentions the number of fortified places ("places fortifiées," "forteresses" according to de Goeje's translation), which in only a few rare cases he calls by name. According to his data, at the time of his visit to the Empire, i.e. in the forties of the ninth century, there were ten fortified towns in the theme of Thrace, as against three in the theme of Macedonia (the other themes of the Balkan peninsula are not described by Ibn-Khordādhbeh), which he does not name, while in the themes of Asia Minor there were all together 128 cities and fortified places.⁶⁷ Here again we see the same contrast between the number of Balkan and Anatolian towns. In the light of what has been said above, we must not only reject the notion that there were only five cities in Asia Minor at the time of Ibn-Khordādhbeh, but we must also suppose that their number was in fact greater than the sum total of fortified places mentioned by the Arab geographer.

It should be noted, too, that the old towns not only continued to exist, but were subsequently fortified and rebuilt, and, what is more important, that new towns were being founded. In the Chronicle of the Patriarch Nicephorus there is a statement that the Emperor Constantine V, around the year 755, "began to build towns (πολίσματα) in Thrace" for the Syrians and Armenians whom he had brought over from Melitene and Theodosiopolis, and whom he had "provided with every necessity and generously endowed."⁶⁸ We may assume that such migrations, frequent in Byzantium between the seventh and ninth centuries, were in other cases, too, accompanied by the building of cities and forts. Such was the migration of Slav population to Asia Minor as well as that of people from Asia Minor to the deserted and ravaged regions of the Balkans. It is tempt-

Sebasteia, Sebastopolis, Sinope, Smyrna, Syllaion, Synada, Tarsus, Theodosiana, Theodosiopolis, Trapezus, Tyana. To these might be added a list of smaller localities and fortresses: Amnia, Andrasos, Apollonias, Artake, Atroa, Bryas, Darenon, Herakleokastron, Kamachon, Kelbianon, Kopidnadon, Krasos, Libos, Malagina, Malakopea, Masalaion, Melon, Modrina, Phoenix, Siderokastron, Sision, Sophon, Sykekastron, Taranton.

⁶⁵ Apart from Constantinople itself, the following are the more important Balkan towns referred to by Theophanes after the beginning of the seventh century: Adrianople, Anchialus, Arcadiopolis, Athens, Barna, Beroea (Thrace), Develtus, Heraclea (Thrace), Marcianopolis, Mesembria, Monobasia (= Monemvasia), Odyssus, Philippi, Philippopolis, Selymbria, Serdica, Thessalonica, Tomis, Tzurullon, and the following lesser settlements and fortresses: Abrolebas, Lithosoria, Marcellae, Medeia, Meleona, Probaton, Versinicia.

⁶⁶ Každan, *op. cit.*, p. 165.

⁶⁷ Ibn-Khordādhbeh, *Bibl. geographorum arabicorum*, ed. M. J. de Goeje, VI, pp. 77-80.

⁶⁸ Niceph. 66, 11. Cf. Theoph. 429, 26.

ing to suppose that it was emigrants from the Anatolian Chrysopolis who built the town of Chrysopolis at the mouth of the Strymon that replaced destroyed Amphipolis.⁶⁹ On the other hand, the migration of a Serbian group to Asia Minor probably caused the foundation of the town Gordoserbon in Bithynia, which, as we have already noticed, is first mentioned in synodal acts of the end of the seventh century.⁷⁰ The renovation of old Thracian towns by the Empress Irene is directly mentioned in the Chronicle of Theophanes, which says that Irene, after visiting Thrace in 784, ordered the rebuilding (οἰκοδομηθῆναι κελεύσασα) of Beroea and later that of Anchialus.⁷¹ The same chronicler reports that the Emperor Nicephorus I rebuilt (ἔκτισε) Ancyra, Thebasa, and Andrasos.⁷² Well-known inscriptions, re-edited and studied by Grégoire, speak of the fortification of Ancyra and Nicaea by Michael III.⁷³ Even if the building activity known from such occasional and incomplete data was primarily determined by military considerations, it attests not to the decline but to the growth of towns. In particular, as far as the Balkan peninsula is concerned, it reflects the process of the gradual re-establishment of Byzantine authority in certain regions, and this is confirmed, as we have seen, by the appearance of new bishoprics in conciliar acts.

We have, unfortunately, almost no information about the character and life of Byzantine cities in our period. The little that we do have concerns only cities like Constantinople, Thessalonica, and the most prominent centres of Asia Minor, about whose importance there is absolutely no question. Thus, for example, a stray remark in the Chronicle of Theophanes tells us that at the end of the eighth century the fair of Ephesus yielded 100 lbs. of gold in commercial taxes.⁷⁴ The sum is enormous, and possibly exaggerated. Or again, in the beginning of the ninth century Gregory the Decapolite saw in the harbor of Ephesus a multitude of ships (πλῆθος πλοίων) engaged in commerce.⁷⁵ Nicaea, according to the Continuator of Theophanes, was a city of ancient wealth and large population (πόλις ἀρχαίοπλουτος καὶ πολὺάνδρος).⁷⁶ There is no reason to doubt that many other cities, both the coastal ones and the more important centers of the hinterland, retained their importance, not only as military and administrative posts, but also as centers of trade and the crafts. Otherwise the continuance of a developed monetary economy in Byzantium would have been inconceivable.

That the economy was a monetary one is confirmed, as we have seen, both by

⁶⁹ Cf. F. Papazoglu, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

⁷⁰ Cf. St. Stanojević, *Vizantijska i Srbi* (1906), p. 41; *Istorija naroda Jugoslavije*, I (1953), p. 229.

⁷¹ Theoph. 417, 6–11. The Thracian Beroea (Stara Zagora) which is mentioned by Hierocles and the bishop of which was present at Chalcedon in 451, does not feature in later conciliar acts and reappears only at the anti-Photian Council of 869 (Mansi, XVII, 1948). It is certainly the Thracian town which is here referred to, for the signature of its Bishop is followed by those of the Bishops of Tzurullon and Heraclea. Anchialus, known to Hierocles and appearing in the Acts of the Fifth Oecumenical Council of 553, is found again only in the Acts of the Photian Council of 879 (Mansi, XVI, 376–77). We do not find the bishops of either of these towns at the Council of 787.

⁷² Theoph. 481, 9.

⁷³ H. Grégoire, "Inscriptions historiques byzantines," *Byzantion*, 4 (1927/8), p. 437f.

⁷⁴ Theoph. 469, 31: τὸ κομμάριον τοῦ πανηγυρίου ἐ λίτρων χρυσοῦ ὄν.

⁷⁵ *Vie de Saint Grégoire le Décapolite*, ed. Dvornik, p. 53, 19.

⁷⁶ Theoph. Cont. 464, 8. Cf. Každan, *op. cit.*, p. 184 ff., where he has assembled other evidence from narrative sources.

numismatic evidence, and by a multitude of data in Byzantine and non-Byzantine sources, of narrative as well as of juridical character. We learn from them that taxes, the salaries of officials, and even the wages of both city and village labourers were paid in money. The Farmer's Law often speaks of the daily wage of village laborers, communal herdsmen, and guards,⁷⁷ and in one passage explicitly states that this daily wage consisted of 12 *folles*.⁷⁸ The same wage is mentioned in papyri and in hagiographic documents.⁷⁹ Monetary fines appear both in the Farmer's Law and in the *Ecloga*.⁸⁰ The ninth-century Arab geographer Ibn Khordâdbeh indicates the cash pay of Byzantine soldiers and officers of different ranks.⁸¹ The highest received the enormous sum of 40 lbs. a year, a figure that appears likewise in a somewhat later official pay list of the *strategi* of the themes dating from the reign of Leo VI.⁸² The same Arab writer reports that a hearth-tax of 6 *dirchem* was levied in Byzantium on each household.⁸³ This again is confirmed by the statement of a Byzantine chronicler that in the twenties of the ninth century each provincial taxpayer contributed 2 *miliaresia* by way of *kapnikon*.⁸⁴

The developed state of the Byzantine monetary economy in the early Middle Ages appears most clearly in the well-known account by Theophanes of the financial measures of Nicephorus I (802-811).⁸⁵ Here we are told of various taxes and duties, among them a fee of 2 *keratia* that was charged for the issue of official acquittances; of a duty of 2 *nomismata* on each imported slave; of the obligation of village communities to contribute a given sum (18 1/2 *nomismata*) for the upkeep and equipment of indigent soldiers; of the considerable loans (12 lbs. of gold) which the Treasury granted at heavy interest to merchants and ship-owners. Although these data refer to the early years of the ninth century, we may apply them without reservation to the preceding period as well, since they express nothing new, but merely mark the introduction of a stricter financial control and a more stringent exaction of government revenues within an existing framework.

Theophanes' account of the loans that the Emperor Nicephorus gave to traders beyond the sea should be compared with the so-called Rhodian Sea Law (νόμος ναυτικός), presumably composed in the seventh or eighth century.⁸⁶ This juridical compilation of the early Middle Ages reflects a fairly intensive maritime trade. It enumerates different types of merchandise, among them gold and silver. The value of merchandise as also the income of the captain shipowner (ναύκληρος), his assistants, and sailors are all expressed in monetary units.

⁷⁷ Ed. W. Ashburner, "The Farmer's Law," *Journal of Hellenic Studies*, 30 (1910), para. 22, 25, 33, 34.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, para. 22.

⁷⁹ Cf. G. Ostrogorsky, "Löhne und Preise in Byzanz," *BZ*, 32 (1932), p. 295 ff.

⁸⁰ *Farmer's Law*, para. 22, 62. *Ecloga*, XVII 29. Cf. Ostrogorsky, *op. cit.*, 305 for monetary fines in the legal documents of the preceding and following periods.

⁸¹ Ibn Khordâdbeh, p. 84.

⁸² *De Caerim.*, 696, 13-14.

⁸³ Ibn Khordâdbeh, *loc. cit.*

⁸⁴ Theoph. Cont. 54, 4-7.

⁸⁵ Theoph. 486-7.

⁸⁶ W. Ashburner, *The Rhodian Sea Law* (Oxford, 1909).

Trading operations are often said to be conducted on credit, and we are told about loans and interest. Here, too, cash fines are appointed for certain offenses.⁸⁷

All these data, which it would be easy to multiply, attest to the preponderant role of a monetary economy in early medieval Byzantium. A developed monetary economy implies in turn a developed urban life and a considerable number of towns.

Granted, however, that the continuous existence of a great many cities is proven, it does not follow that the Byzantine town did not differ in many ways from the ancient *polis*. The ruralization of towns was a common phenomenon in the Middle Ages, and it also affected Byzantium. Even in the largest cities a part of the population was engaged in cultivation and viniculture. The *Miracula S. Demetrii* tell us that during one of the Avaro-Slavic attacks on Thessalonica many of the inhabitants were outside the city walls, having gone out to work in their fields.⁸⁸

It is not true that in the early Middle Ages Byzantine towns were in complete decay and had nearly ceased to exist. No more is it true that they preserved intact the organization of the ancient *polis*, since a certain decline of city life had already started in late Roman times. The greatest authorities on ancient history see in this decline one of the most important aspects of the general decay of the Empire.⁸⁹ Perhaps in this, too, there is a certain degree of exaggeration, since the cities as such did not cease to exist; yet there is no doubt that even in the late-Roman period the old municipal organization began to decay. This process was not only continued, but intensified in early Byzantine times, until, with the introduction of the theme system, municipal government was altogether destroyed.⁹⁰ The most important towns of the Byzantine provinces became the seats of the *strategi*, and centers of their military and civil organization. In becoming the nerve center of the Empire, the new military and bureaucratic machinery stifled the last remains of city autonomy.

The results of this process may be observed in the peripheral regions of the Empire; at Cherson on the one side, in Dalmatia on the other, where we see how, with the introduction of the theme system, imperial power replaced local city rule.^{90a} In the central regions of the Empire this change must have occurred even more rapidly and radically. Municipal organization had long been dead when its final abolition was formally decreed by Leo VI, whose well-known *novella* pro-

⁸⁷ For a fuller treatment of this point see E. E. Lipšic, "K voprosu o gorode v Vizantii VIII-IX vv.," *Viz. Vrem.*, 6 (1953), p. 117 ff., where the importance of the Sea Law in connection with this problem is rightly emphasized.

⁸⁸ *Miracula Sancti Demetrii*, II, 2. no. 170.

⁸⁹ Cf. M. Rostovtseff, *The Social and Economic History of the Roman Empire* (Oxford, 1926), p. 478 ff. W. M. Ramsay (*The Cities and Bishoprics of Phrygia*, 2 vols. [Oxford, 1895-1897]) has very clearly shown how certain ancient cities declined as the old Roman routes lost their predominant position: the case of Apamea is especially instructive in this connection. But even this phenomenon, brought about by the transfer of the center of communications to Constantinople, goes back to the early Byzantine period. Furthermore, just as the older focal points declined in importance at this time, so, on the other hand, did the towns situated on the routes connected with the new capital become more prominent.

⁹⁰ Cf. Bratianu, *op. cit.*, p. 83 ff.

^{90a} Cf. J. Ferluga, *Vizantiska uprava u Dalmaciji* (Belgrade, 1957) (with a French summary: *L'administration byzantine en Dalmatie*, p. 154-62).

claims that henceforward all authority is vested in the emperor and his administration.⁹¹ The triumph of all-embracing centralism more than anything else explains why the subsequent development of Byzantine urban life was marked by a certain impotence, why it did not produce that class of traders and craftsmen who in the West were the forerunners of new times, and why, finally, Byzantine towns were left so far behind the rising power of the Italian cities. But that is another subject, and a very large one too.

To come back to the early Middle Ages: by surviving the crisis that assailed the imperial domains as the ancient world gave place to the medieval, the Byzantine cities, and especially those of Asia Minor, assured the continued existence of a monetary economy and, in this way, safeguarded the proverbial wealth of the Empire. This, it would seem, was the chief element of stability that preserved the traditional framework of the state. At the same time, however, the provinces underwent a violent upheaval and agrarian relations were completely changed, thereby altering and renovating the whole social structure of Byzantium; and in this renovation was the source of new strength which determined the subsequent evolution of the Empire.

⁹¹ Nov. Leonis XLVI, ed. Noailles-Dain (Paris, 1944), pp. 183-5.

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THE BYZANTINE EMPIRE
IN THE WORLD OF
THE SEVENTH CENTURY

GEORGE OSTROGORSKY

This study is in substance identical with a paper delivered at the Symposium on "Byzantium in the Seventh Century" held at Dumbarton Oaks in May 1957.

The author wishes to express his warmest thanks to Mr. Cyril Mango and Mr. John Parker for having translated this study from the Russian.

IN discussing some of the characteristic features of Byzantium's position as a world power in the seventh century I do not, of course, intend to make a detailed survey of the history of that period. Its salient features are well known to us. There is no need for me to go through all the stages of the Arab conquests in Western Asia and Africa, the Slavic settlement in the Balkans, or the Lombard invasion of Italy. Here we are interested not so much in the actual progress of these remarkable events as in their consequences. The important question for us is, how were these tremendous upheavals reflected in the Byzantine Empire? I shall, therefore, attempt to determine the position of Byzantium in the surrounding world after the collapse of the Empire of Justinian, and how it appeared to the Byzantines themselves at that time.

After the break-up of Justinian's restored Roman Empire in the West, the mass incursion of the Slavs into the Balkan peninsula, and the very rapid conquests of the Arabs in the East, Byzantine power was confined within territorial limits which were, by comparison, quite modest. What is more, the Empire, thus reduced on all sides, did not present any sort of unity. It was made up of several clearly differentiated parts, and conditions within these varied so widely that, in order to give any sort of picture of the general position of the Empire, we must first consider separately the state of affairs in each part.

We may begin with the most important of all, Asia Minor. Notwithstanding its quite unique importance for the very existence of the Byzantine state, I need say here only a few words about this region. Mesopotamia, Syria, Palestine, and Egypt had all been lost in the first few years of the Arab onslaught. An immediate, urgent threat hung over Asia Minor and over the capital of the Empire itself. But after the historic victory outside Constantinople in the 670's a decisive change came about. The Empire retained its vital center and Asia Minor, too, remained in its possession. By this fact, the further existence of the Empire was assured. It is necessary to underline this fact as clearly as possible, for Asia Minor was the basis and foundation of medieval Byzantium. Many times subjected to invasion and devastation, though not permanently conquered by the enemy, Asia Minor was the most important and most enduring bulwark of Byzantine strength. Upon it depended the power and the very existence of the medieval Byzantine state.

It was in Asia Minor, too, that the renovation of the state was begun. Here the theme system first came into being – the new military and administrative organization which gave to medieval Byzantium its special strength. Within the frontiers of its much reduced territory the Empire was a more cohesive structure than before, endowed with greater internal solidity. The reconstitution of the state gave it a political strength that the later Roman Empire, gigantic but decaying from within, had never possessed, and also a much greater degree of spiritual unity, for the heterogeneous nature of the earlier Empire had caused continuous internal unrest. It is enough for us to

recall the age-old differences that had divided the central regions of the Empire from its Eastern provinces and the never-ending religious controversies in which these differences most tangibly expressed themselves, controversies which it was in fact impossible to settle, as proved by the fruitlessness of all attempts made by the tortuous imperial policy to bring about a pacification. A solution was finally reached only by the loss of the Eastern provinces—a loss which was itself brought about in no small measure by the unresolved conflict between Byzantium and the communities of the East, the Syrians and the Copts. In the East, therefore, Byzantium had come to rest upon a base which was greatly shrunken, but which was firm and had been strengthened by internal reorganization. Although, here as elsewhere, it was often menaced by hostile invasion, the power of the Empire in Asia Minor remained unshaken.

In the Balkans the situation was considerably more complicated and the position of the Empire immeasurably weaker. The stream of Slavic colonization, which had begun in some places at the end of the sixth century, had poured in an irresistible flood over the whole Balkan peninsula early in the seventh, after the failure of the Danubian campaigns of Maurice and the complete collapse of the old system in the time of Phocas. The movement extended from the Danube to Southern Greece, and from the Adriatic to the Black Sea. The former population was either wiped out or fled to the mountains, the coastal regions, and the adjacent islands. The ancient cities in the interior were ravaged, and only a few towns in the coastal areas held out in the midst of the Slavic flood. All the evidence indicates that outside these few strongholds there was no organized Byzantine power in the Balkans during the first half of the seventh century. The Balkan peninsula fell apart into numerous Slavic regions, the “Sclavinias,” as the Byzantine sources call them.

The full scale of the Byzantine catastrophe in the Balkans has not been generally appreciated. What has led to confusion is that Byzantine authority in this area was not replaced by the organized power of another state, but by a number of separate Slavic tribes or tribal confederations. Insofar as the “Sclavinias” did not constitute a sovereign power, able to substitute itself for that of the Empire, it was possible to maintain the fiction of Byzantine sovereignty in the Balkan peninsula even after the Slavic occupation. But this presumption of authority by no means reflected the actual state of affairs, and with the eruption of the Bulgars into the Balkans there came into being, about 680, a sovereign state which Byzantium was obliged to recognize as such. The Empire was confronted with a strong rival, with which it would have to wage a desperate struggle for Balkan hegemony and for influence over the “Sclavinias.”

Constantine Porphyrogenitus, describing the migration of the Croats and Serbs from the regions beyond the Carpathians into the Balkans (chapters 29–36 of *De administrando imperio*), emphasizes with tedious persistence that these two powerful Slavic tribes had always been subject to the Emperor of the Romans, and that “never were they subject to the *archon* of Bulgaria”.¹

¹ *De adm. imp.*, ed. Moravcsik-Jenkins, especially c. 31,58 and c. 32,146.

The migration of the Croats and Serbs represents the second great wave of Slavic colonization in the Balkans, brought about by the decline in the power of the Avars after their disastrous defeat near Constantinople in 626. Whereas the first wave of Slavic colonization had moved forward in alliance with the Avars and under their leadership, the Croats occupied their new lands in the Balkans after a struggle with the Avars, whom they displaced. Seen in this light, the assertion of Constantine Porphyrogenitus that the migration of the Croats and Serbs took place in agreement with the Emperor Heraclius and was accompanied by a recognition of Byzantine sovereign rights does not seem in any way improbable. However, we should not lose sight of the fact that contrasted to the Emperor's persistent repetition of this version of the facts in chapters 29 and 31-36, is the complete absence in chapter 30 of any reference whatever to participation of the Byzantine government in these events.

In any case, relations between Byzantium and the "Sclavinias" were shifting and changeable, and varied greatly at different times and in different areas. We are, thanks to the *Miracula Sancti Demetrii*, rather well informed about the group of tribes in Macedonia which, not later than the beginning of the seventh century, had permanently settled in the neighborhood of Salonica. These Macedonian Slavs often made fierce attacks against Salonica and even raided parts of Greece and the islands, both by land and sea;² sometimes, however, peace prevailed and some sort of *modus vivendi* was worked out between the inhabitants of the city and the neighboring tribes.³ But even in the few strongholds that remained in their hands the Byzantines had constantly and laboriously to keep up their defenses.

Only in 658—more than half a century after the beginning of this catastrophic phase—did the Emperor Constans II undertake a counteroffensive against the "Sclavinias," probably in the region of Thrace or Macedonia, where, as the Chronicle of Theophanes briefly notes, he "captured and subjugated many."⁴ This, it would seem, means that the Emperor was able to compel the Slavic tribes of this area to recognize Byzantine sovereignty, but it also indicates that, up to that time, they had not acknowledged it. What is more, it appears that this recognition was short-lived.

In 688/9 Justinian II once more campaigned against the "Sclavinias" and Bulgaria. Having warded off the opposition of the Bulgars, he forced his way to Salonica through the lands occupied by the Slavs and made a solemn entry into the city of St. Demetrius. Once again we are told that he, like his grandfather Constans II thirty years previously, "subjugated a great multitude of Slavs" and settled them in the theme of Opsikion, in Asia Minor.⁵ But wars with the restless inhabitants of the "Sclavinias" were to go on for a long time after this. Even when Byzantium succeeded in obtaining recognition of its sovereignty, this recognition proved to be transitory and precarious. In the middle of the eighth century the iconoclast Constantine V again fought

² *Miracula S. Demetrii*, II. 1, II. 2.

³ *Ibid.*, II. 4.

⁴ Theophanes, ed. De Boor, p. 347, 6.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 364, 11-15.

the Sclavinias in Macedonia, and again subdued them;⁶ in the eighties of the same century Stauracius, the logothete of the orthodox Empress Irene, once more moved against the Slavs "with numerous military forces," invaded the area of Salonica and also penetrated into central Greece, where (in the words of the chronicler) "he conquered all the people [i.e., the Slavs] and laid them under tribute," which, evidently, they had not previously been paying. He proceeded further and visited the Peloponnese, whence he carried off many captives.⁷ As the Chronicle of Monemvasia is careful to emphasize, the Slavs in the Peloponnese, an area which, according to this source, they occupied from the end of the sixth to the beginning of the ninth century, were subject "neither to the emperor of the Romans, nor to anyone else."⁸

The question whether Byzantine sovereign rights were recognized by the south Slavic tribes is interesting primarily from the point of view of Byzantine state theory, but to some extent the recognition or non-recognition of this sovereignty did undoubtedly reflect the real balance of forces. As we have seen, Byzantium did not give up its traditional pretensions to supreme authority, but was able to put them into effect only in some areas and for a limited period. However, in order to obtain a clear picture of actual conditions in the Balkans during the seventh century it is important for us to determine how far the governing power of the Empire was effectively exercised, rather than to what extent its nominal sovereign rights were acknowledged. The fundamental point is not whether the more or less theoretical supremacy of the Emperor extended over the Slavs, but whether the real force of Byzantine government did so. That is, were the "Sclavinias" directly subject to the Byzantine administrative apparatus? To this question a negative answer must be given. We may define the "Sclavinias"—that all-important concept in the history of the Balkans from the seventh to the ninth century—by saying that they were the territories occupied by the Slavs, not in themselves constituting any organized state, but separated from the Empire and outside the sphere of its direct administrative authority.

We must not forget that in this period Byzantine power in the provinces rested upon the theme organization. Wherever a Byzantine provincial administration existed and functioned, the theme system was also to be found. Where there were no themes, there was likewise no Byzantine administration. This is the one infallible gauge of the actual state of affairs. Wherever Byzantium succeeded in preserving its power through this period of crisis, or was able to overcome this crisis and reconstitute its position, the theme system was set up. Thus it was introduced within the boundaries of Asia Minor as early as the first half of the seventh century.

What state of affairs do we find in the Balkans? First of all it is noteworthy that the theme-organization arose here considerably later than in Asia Minor, and that in the beginning it developed extremely slowly and was

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 430, 21.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 456, 25-457, 2.

⁸ Ν. Βέης, Τὸ "Περὶ κτίσεως τῆς Μονεμβασίας" χρονικόν, Βυζαντίς, I (1909), pp. 67-68. P. Charanis, "The Chronicle of Monemvasia," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 5 (1950), p. 147.

confined to a few areas. According to Constantine Porphyrogenitus, the first theme in the Balkan peninsula, the Thracian, adjacent to the capital, was founded at the time the Bulgarians crossed the Danube—that is to say, about 680.⁹ In the famous letter of Justinian II to the Pope, dated 17 February 687, among the members of the state council is mentioned the commander of the Thracian army—the one and only *strategus* of a theme in the Balkan area, together with the *strategi* of the four themes of Asia Minor then in existence and the Exarchs of Italy and Africa.¹⁰ Soon after that, between 687 and 695 the theme of Hellas was founded: Leontius, who dethroned Justinian II at the end of 695 was the *strategus* of this theme.¹¹ So at the end of the century there were two themes in the Balkan peninsula, that of Thrace which probably embraced those regions of the former Thracian diocese which had remained intact after the Slavic colonization and the setting-up of the Bulgarian state, and the theme of Hellas which seems to have comprised Central Greece. For a century this situation remained unaltered; no new themes were set up in the Balkans. Only at the end of the eighth century was the process of organizing themes in this area taken up anew, and then it developed rapidly. This process reflects the gradual reconstitution of Byzantine power after the collapse it underwent in the time of the Slavic migrations. It gives us a clear picture of the progress of the Byzantine reoccupation—of its successes, but also of its limitations. We cannot here trace all the stages of this process which was at first extremely slow and laborious, but which later became intensive and effective. Its final result was that by the middle of the ninth century the districts of Greece and the coastal regions on both the east and west of the peninsula had been transformed into a series of Byzantine themes under Byzantine jurisdiction. Almost the whole coast-line was girdled with themes, by means of which Byzantium was able to revive its “thalassocracy.” The interior of the peninsula, however, remained unaffected by this development, and here Slavic states came into being.

With this the period of the “Sclavinias” ends. Where Byzantine administrative authority was restored they dissolved into the theme-organization; in those areas that remained outside the confines of imperial power they were absorbed by the rising Slavic states. In this way a certain equilibrium was established. Cultural zones were formed which exist even today. The frontiers between the Byzantine and Slavic spheres in the middle of the ninth century correspond fairly exactly to the cultural zones which the eminent Yugoslav geographer Cvijić has defined in modern times. The region which Cvijić calls the “Greco-Mediterranean zone” corresponds, in its type of village settlement and habitation, more or less to the region over which the theme-organization extended in the mid-ninth century as a result of the Byzantine reoccupation.¹²

⁹ *De thematibus*, ed. Pertusi, c. 1, 7. It is possible, however, that the first steps in the organization of this central theme took place at a considerably earlier date. Already in the 30's of the seventh century there is a mention of Thracian units of the army and of their commander whom, however, the Patriarch Nicephorus, (ed. De Boor, p. 24, 19,) with his customary affectation in the use of titles does not call the *strategus* but ὁ τῶν θρακικῶν ἐκστρατευμάτων ἡγεμῶν.

¹⁰ Mansi, XI, 737 B.

¹¹ Theoph., p. 368, 21.

¹² J. Cvijić, *La péninsule balkanique* (Paris, 1918).

However, in the early centuries of the Byzantine middle ages we are still at the beginning of this development. In the seventh and eighth centuries the Balkan peninsula, as we have seen, presented a conglomeration of Slavic settlements which—whether or not they acknowledged Byzantine sovereignty—were a foreign land, outside the Empire's jurisdiction. We have seen that Justinian II opened up a road from Constantinople to Salonica by force of arms. To do this he had to transfer cavalry forces from the themes of Asia Minor to Thrace.¹³ His entry into Salonica was celebrated as a significant triumph over the Slavs. He made lavish grants to the church of St. Demetrius, the protector of the city, in gratitude for his victory "over the common enemy,"¹⁴ and it is possible that one of the frescoes in the church depicts his entry into the city.¹⁵

In the seventh century Byzantine power in the Balkans had collapsed almost entirely; but in time it was to increase again, though this was a slow process. Moreover, the Balkan regions wrested from the Empire remained open to the influences of Byzantine culture, which, from the strongholds that were retained, was able to penetrate them on an ever-increasing scale. In the West, on the other hand, the Byzantine dominions, which in the seventh century were still extensive, were doomed to slow extinction. The Exarchates of Ravenna and Carthage were indisputably important outposts of Byzantium in the West, but these remnants of Justinian's shattered Roman Empire were moving inexorably towards their liquidation. The African possessions were all finally lost by the turn of the eighth century; the Lombards were to take possession of the Exarchate of Ravenna in the middle of that century and thereafter Rome itself, the spiritual center of the West, was to turn away decisively from Byzantium. Only South Italy, which, together with the Balkan region of Illyricum, was annexed to the Patriarchate of Constantinople by the Iconoclasts in the middle of the eighth century, and which was to preserve its Greek culture, remained for a considerable period thereafter within the orbit of Byzantine influence.¹⁶

Here once again what interests us is not the external course of these events, familiar to all, but the question of Byzantium's relations with its Western possessions and with the West in general. We shall attempt to determine

¹³ Theoph., p. 364, 8.

¹⁴ A. A. Vasiliev, "An Edict of the Emperor Justinian II, September 688," *Speculum*, 18 (1943), p. 1 ff.; H. Grégoire, "Un édit de l'empereur Justinien II daté de Septembre 688," *Byzantion* 17 (1944/5), p. 119 ff.

¹⁵ This was suggested by E. Kantorowitz, "The King's Advent," *The Art Bulletin*, 26 (1944), p. 216, note 63, and supported by A. A. Vasiliev, "L'entrée triomphale de l'empereur Justinien II à Thessalonique en 688," *Orientalia Christiana Periodica*, 13 (1947), p. 355 ff. J. D. Breckenridge, "The Long Siege of Thessalonika, Its Date and Iconography," *BZ*, 48 (1955), p. 116 ff., points out some difficulties in this interpretation. To my mind the only real difficulty is the fact that the city wall is represented as being on fire; however, Breckenridge does not give any more probable explanation of the fresco in question.

¹⁶ V. Grumel, "L'annexion de l'Illyricum oriental, de la Sicile et de la Calabre au patriarcat de Constantinople," *Recherches de science religieuse*, 40 (1952), p. 191 ff., has suggested that this annexation did not take place in the early 730's, as had been thought, but only some twenty years later, after the fall of Byzantine power in central Italy, during the pontificate of Pope Stephen II. M. V. Anastos, "The Transfer of Illyricum, Calabria, and Sicily to the Jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Constantinople in 732-33," *Silloge Bizantina in onore di S. G. Marcati* (Rome, 1957), p. 14 ff., rejects this view and maintains the former date.

what significance the Byzantine government attributed to its Western lands, how far it exerted itself to preserve them, and, on the other hand, how closely connected the Byzantine people felt themselves to be with the Western portion of the Empire, to what extent they interested themselves in the West and what, if anything, they knew about this region. These are two aspects of the problem which, as we shall see, do not coincide.

The break-up of Justinian's Empire which was begun by the advance of the Lombards into Italy in 568 compelled his successors to shift the focus of their policy to the East. Above everything else, in order to assure its very existence, it was essential that the Empire's tottering position on that front be strengthened. It is nevertheless remarkable how active an interest the imperial government showed in its Western possessions for several generations after the reign of Justinian. The loss of most of his conquests in the West and the enforced preoccupation with the East did not mean the renunciation of the idea of universal Empire or the abandonment of the defense of what was left in the West. The foundation of the Exarchates of Ravenna and Carthage in the reign of Maurice, the most notable of Justinian's successors, proves the opposite to have been the case. How hard Maurice tried to maintain the old universal traditions, and how little inclined he was to abandon the West is shown by his famous will. By the terms of this will which, according to Theophylact Simocatta, was drawn up by Maurice during a serious illness in 597 and discovered after the accession of Heraclius, his eldest son Theodosius was to rule over the East from Constantinople and his second son Tiberius, as Emperor of "Old Rome," was to have authority over Italy and the Tyrrhenian islands; to his other sons Maurice bequeathed "the remaining portions of the Roman state."¹⁷ Thus Rome, as a second capital, was once more to become an imperial city. The dream of universal hegemony had not been given up, nor had the tradition of dividing the one Roman Empire between members of the ruling dynasty been forgotten.

It is also well known that Heraclius, son of the Exarch of Africa, who was brought to the throne by the power of the African fleet, considered transferring the capital to Carthage.¹⁸ Hemmed in by the Persians and Avars, the Eastern part of the Empire at the beginning of his reign seemed too weak to be an effective base for counterattack. This plan was not carried out, but its mere conception is unquestionably a clear indication not only of the extreme difficulty of the position in the East at that time, but also of the attraction which the old Western Roman region had for the imperial government.

Even more indicative, in this respect, is the story of Constans II. Whereas Heraclius had only temporarily considered transferring the center of government to the West, his grandson actually realized this idea. According to Theophanes, his intention was to remove his residence to Rome.¹⁹ In fact he

¹⁷ Theophylactus Simocatta, ed. De Boor, pp. 305, 25-306, 13. As Bury, *Later Roman Empire*, II (1889), p. 94, note 2, suggests, this probably meant that one of them was to rule over Illyricum and the other over Africa.

¹⁸ Niceph., p. 12, 10.

¹⁹ Theophanes, p. 348, 5.

contented himself with a brief visit to the Eternal City and then established himself in Syracuse, thus taking up a key position between Italy, partly conquered by the Lombards, and North Africa which was menaced by the Arab invaders.

In reality, however, historical developments increasingly confined the Byzantine sphere of activity to the East, and the violent end of Constans after five ineffective years in Syracuse merely emphasized this fact. Although Byzantium never gave up its worldwide pretensions and never ceased to insist upon its supreme authority, the dream of a universal empire nevertheless grew faint. It seems to have appealed less to the successors of Constans II, and was even more alien to the Emperors of the eighth century. The government's keen interest in Western affairs had not, for a long time, been shared by the average Byzantine citizen. It is known that Heraclius' African plans aroused much apprehension in Constantinople, and that the departure of Constans II for Italy caused open dissatisfaction. Notwithstanding imperial aspirations for a world-Empire, the bonds between East and West in fact grew constantly weaker. The seventh century is an important stage in this process of mutual estrangement, and to some extent marks its turning point.

This assertion is, in itself, by no means new. Henri Pirenne pointed out with particular insistence how the ties between West and East were weakened in the seventh and eighth centuries, and, as is well known, he considered the principal cause of this weakening to be the penetration of the Arabs into the central Mediterranean basin.²⁰ It is unnecessary to enter here into a detailed examination of this famous theory. We are familiar with the very telling objections which have been brought against it, objections which demonstrated the insufficiency of its principal arguments.²¹ Nobody, of course, would wish to dispute the claim that the Arab invasion furthered a division between East and West, nor would anybody fail to recognize the ingenuity of Pirenne's very provocative ideas. But no-one at the present time could agree that the Arab invasion was the only, or even the principal, cause of the separation between the two halves of the former Roman Empire.

In this connection Professor Dvornik has recently indicated how important was the occupation of the Balkan peninsula by the Slavs.²² His observations are most pertinent, although the point here, it seems to me, is not so much the destruction of Christianity in Illyricum, on which he lays chief emphasis, as the actual fact of the Slavic occupation of the Balkans, which erected a new barrier between East and West. This did more to destroy normal relations than did the Arab attacks on the sea.

An example taken from a somewhat later source will illustrate this state of affairs clearly enough. I have in mind the life of St. Gregory the Decapolite, composed in the first half of the ninth century, which Professor Dvornik has

²⁰ Cf especially his *Mahomet et Charlemagne* (Paris—Brussels, 1937).

²¹ Cf. for instance R. S. Lopez, "Mohammed and Charlemagne: A Revision," *Speculum*, 18 (1943), pp. 14–38; Anne Riising, "The Fate of Henri Pirenne's Theses on the Consequences of the Islamic Expansion," *Classica et Mediaevalia*, 13 (1952), pp. 87–130 (with complete bibliography).

²² F. Dvornik, *The Slavs, their Early History and Civilization* (Boston, 1956), p. 44 ff.

edited. This tells of the Saint's numerous voyages by sea. Many other sources, and in particular hagiographic works, also contain information about sea travel in the Mediterranean in the early middle ages, but we must here confine ourselves to this one very clear example. About the year 820 Gregory the Decapolite, having decided to travel from Ephesus to Constantinople, learned that a large number of merchant vessels in the harbor of Ephesus was ready to put to sea, though their captains were unwilling to weigh anchor because of the Arab pirates who were lying in wait for them.²³ Nevertheless, protected by the prayers of the Saint, they reached Proconnesus safe and sound. From Proconnesus Gregory did not continue his journey to Constantinople, but took another ship to Aenus and thence, again by sea, went on to Christopolis²⁴ where he went ashore and continued his journey by land. However, near a river—probably the Strymon, which was not far distant—he was captured by "Slavic brigands."²⁵ Impressed by the Saint's personality and bearing, the Slavs released him and thus he came to Salonica. There he met a monk with whom he decided to travel to Rome, but, instead of setting out along the Via Egnatia as anyone would have done in Roman times, since it was by far the shorter route, he once more chose the sea route, ignoring sailors' warnings about Arab pirates.²⁶ So, by devious ways, he came, via Corinth, to Reggio, and there took a ship which had just arrived from Naples.²⁷ After spending three months in Rome, he once more set sail, this time to Syracuse, thence to Otranto,²⁸ and, finally—it is not stated by what means—returned to Salonica, where he remained for some time. Later, however, desiring rest and quiet, he decided to journey to "the mountains of the Slavic regions" with one of his disciples. But they had no sooner set out than the Saint, oppressed with terrible premonitions, hastened home, and in fact a few days later a bloody revolt of "the archon of that Sclavinia" broke out; whereupon Gregory told his disciple that he never travelled from place to place without having procured an imperial pass, properly sealed.²⁹ Later on Gregory twice travelled to Constantinople again, undoubtedly by sea.

We have dealt at some length with the information provided by this hagiographic work, for it enables us to make a number of significant deductions. First of all, it bears witness to a lively sea traffic over the whole Eastern half of the Mediterranean, although it in no way glosses over the dangers of Arab piracy. Franz Dölger has already pointed out the importance of this evidence and has rightly used it against the arguments of Pirenne.³⁰ At the same time the Life of St. Gregory the Decapolite shows—and this has not been sufficiently noted—that travel by land in the Balkan peninsula, even in the first half of

²³ F. Dvornik, *La vie de saint Grégoire le Décapolite* (Paris, 1926), chap. 9.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, chap. 10.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, chap. 10, p. 54, 24. Cf. *Vizantiski izvori za istoriju naroda Jugoslavije*, I (Belgrade, 1955), p. 254.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, chap. 11.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, chap. 12.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, chap. 13.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, chap 17, p. 61, 20–62, 4.

³⁰ F. Dölger, *Byzanz und die europäische Staatenwelt* (1953), p. 365 ff.

the ninth century was almost completely paralyzed. Gregory journeys to and fro across the Mediterranean on his numerous and lengthy voyages; but as soon as he travels the short distance from Christopolis to Salonica by land he falls into the hands of the Slavs. More remarkable, as I have already mentioned, is that he avoids travelling along the celebrated Via Egnatia and makes his way from Salonica to Rome by the lengthy and roundabout sea route. The Slavic penetration thus weakened the link between East and West in a smaller area, but much more seriously than did the maritime incursions of the Arabs. In short, the Life of Gregory the Decapolite shows us that navigation in the Mediterranean continued, whereas communications by land in the Balkan peninsula were still practically paralyzed at the beginning of the ninth century.

The causes of the separation of West and East were numerous and varied and cannot by any means be due solely to the difficulties along the lines of communication. The process of mutual estrangement between the two worlds had begun long before these difficulties developed, and was already in evidence in many ways in the early Byzantine period. In the seventh century this process was intensified to a marked degree. It is not my purpose to go into all of its effects on political, ecclesiastical, and cultural history. But if we wish to determine what conception the inhabitants of the seventh-century Empire had of the world around them, we must note that the average Byzantine showed surprisingly little interest in the West and knew remarkably little about it. For all the attempts of the imperial government to live up to the high traditions of the Roman idea and to cling to the remnants of its former power in the West, this region lay beyond the horizon of most cultured Byzantines at this time.

It is sufficient to refer to our two chief sources for this period to be convinced of this fact. Upon reading the chronicle of either Theophanes or the Patriarch Nicephorus one becomes aware of the pronounced infrequency with which they refer to Western affairs in the seventh century. This indicates that their sources—those seventh-century chronicles which are lost to us but which they used—had little or nothing to say about the West, for neither Theophanes nor Nicephorus was notable for the independence of his thinking; each merely handed on what he found in his sources.

The data which Theophanes supplies in the tables that form a kind of chronological skeleton for his chronicle are very informative in this respect. As is known, the work of Theophanes is distinguished by its detailed and complicated chronological system. The narrative is divided according to years, and at the beginning of each year are indicated, in addition to the date reckoned both by the creation and by the birth of Christ, the years of the reign of the ruling Byzantine emperor and the Persian king—or, later, the Arab caliph—and also the years of the episcopates of the pope and the four Eastern patriarchs. These five supreme representatives of the Christian church are, for the early Byzantine period, introduced with absolute regularity; the pope is cited first, after him the patriarch of Constantinople and thereafter the three other Eastern patriarchs. But as early as the seventies of the sixth century the list of Roman bishops is suddenly cut short; from 574/5 (A.M.6067) the representa-

tives of the Roman Church disappear (in some mss. their years are not indicated after 569/70). They are not cited in Theophanes' tables for an entire century and a half—that is to say, all through the seventh and the first quarter of the eighth century, and reappear only when he reaches the period of the Iconoclasts.

Similarly, the loss of Syria, Palestine, and Egypt removed the Eastern patriarchs from the Byzantine field of vision. Those of Antioch cease to be commemorated in Theophanes' tables as early as 610/11 (A.M. 6102); those of Jerusalem in 636/7 (A.M. 6128); and those of Alexandria in 654/5 (A.M. 6146). Thereafter the tables contain the names of only the emperors, the caliphs, and the patriarchs of Constantinople. In fact the patriarch of Constantinople had become, in the eyes of the Byzantines, the one supreme authority in the Church, and was the only one of the five patriarchs who was of immediate concern to them.³¹

The popes cease to figure in Theophanes' tables not in consequence of any papal clash with Constantinople, but purely and simply because they were no longer of interest to the Byzantines, just as the Eastern patriarchs, cut off by the Arab conquests, had ceased to be of interest to them; seemingly Theophanes found no more information about either in his sources. As I have just pointed out, the names of the Roman popes reappear in Theophanes' tables with the beginning of the Iconoclast period. The opposition of the Roman church to the Iconoclasts caused Theophanes, after an interruption of 150 years, to turn his attention once again to its representatives. Interest in Rome was awakened in orthodox iconodule circles, but knowledge of Roman affairs lagged behind.

Above his entry for A.M. 6217 (= 725/6), in which he speaks of Leo III's first measures against the cult of images, Theophanes first notes: The bishop of Rome, Gregory—9 years. In fact Gregory II had occupied the throne of St. Peter for at least ten years prior to this. What is more, Theophanes was unaware that two popes of this name held the Roman See, one after another. For him Gregory II and Gregory III were one person, whose pontificate he extends from 726 to 735, whereas in fact Gregory II reigned from 715 to 731 and Gregory III from 731 to 741. The latter's successor, Pope Zacharias, was in office, according to Theophanes, from 735 to 756 instead of from 741 to 752 that is, for twenty-one, instead of eleven, years. Pope Stephen II does not appear at all in his chronological tables, and so on.³² None of his data about the

³¹ As an exception, Theophanes, from 707/8 (A.M. 6199) to 735/6 (A.M. 6227), enters in his tables the name of John, Patriarch of Jerusalem, who, he knows "together with the Eastern bishops" anathematized the Iconoclast Leo III (p. 403, 29, A.M. 6221); the names of the other "Eastern bishops" seem to have been unknown to him. Similarly, in 742/3 there suddenly appear the names of the Antiochene patriarchs Stephen, Theophylact, and Theodore, but they break off again as early as 755/6 (A.M. 6247), in the fifth year of the Patriarchate of Theodore, although, as Theophanes himself notes, he was patriarch for six years. It is interesting to see that the Eastern patriarchs are not listed in Theophanes' tables even in the years of the sixth and seventh Oecumenical Councils, although their representatives took part in these Councils. No mention is made of their participation in the narrative of either Theophanes, or the Patriarch Nicephorus. Nor does either of them refer to the participation of the pope's representatives in these councils.

³² Theophanes' narrative, however, deals in some detail with Pope Stephen's "flight" to Pippin's court, dating it as early as 724/5 (A.M. 6216, where the name of the Roman Pope is still not included in the tables)—that is to say, some thirty years too early.

representatives of the Roman church in the eighth century is accurate. His information about the Roman Church in the seventh century is even more meagre.³³ This is particularly striking since his contemporary information about the Arab Caliphs is remarkably exact. The years of their reigns are as well known to him as are those of the Byzantine Emperors themselves, and his data here are so faultlessly accurate that they have provided the main basis for elucidating the notorious chronological problem posed by his chronicle—the discrepancy between years and indictions.³⁴

An examination of the data provided by the second of our chief sources for the early Byzantine middle ages, the *Breviarium* of the Patriarch Nicephorus, is no less instructive in this connection. Apart from a brief reference to the murder of Constans II in Sicily³⁵ (the history of Constans' reign is not dealt with in his work), Nicephorus mentions the Western possessions of Byzantium only twice in dealing with the seventh century, and then very briefly and in passing, and he has nothing at all to say about Western regions lying outside the imperial boundaries. In the first instance he reports that the sacellarius Philagrius was exiled by Heraclonas "to the fortress called Septas, situated in the West, beyond the pillars of Hercules, in Libya";³⁶ in the second, he reports the capture of the Exarchate of Carthage by the Arabs, doing so, however, only in order to narrate the dethronement of Leontius and the accession of Tiberius Apsimar.³⁷ And that is all; there is no word about Ravenna and its Exarchate, no mention of Rome and the Roman church, or of Italy in general.

It is with the East, Asiatic and European, that the chronicles of Theophanes and Nicephorus mainly deal, recounting the great events of external policy during that period. Eastern sources, in turn—especially Armenian and Syriac, sometimes Arab and even Ethiopic—also provide much precious information about Byzantium in this period, incomparably more than do Western sources which, nevertheless, devote more attention to Byzantium than do the Byzantine sources to Western affairs.

Of first importance in the chronicles of Theophanes and Nicephorus are, naturally, the descriptions of the wars with the Persians and, later, from the thirties of the seventh century onward, with the Arabs. One following the other, these two Eastern powers were the only states that stood opposed to Byzantium on terms of equality—often, in fact, as contenders for a position of superiority—and that the Byzantines themselves tacitly accepted as such. We may recall that in his chronological tables Theophanes regularly commemo-

³³ As we have seen, the names and years of the bishops of Rome are entirely omitted in his tables during the seventh century, and when he does refer to them in the text, his information is extremely inaccurate. In contrast to Nicephorus, whose chronicle does not say a single word about the Roman Church in the seventh century, Theophanes mentions, e.g., the Lateran Synod of Pope Martin and dates it correctly to A. M. 6141 (Oct. 649); yet he antedates to 6121 (629/30) the conflict between Martin and the imperial government and refers to Agathon as Martin's successor (p. 332, 4). Actually Agathon (678–81) is separated from Martin (649–55) by twenty-three years and no less than four popes.

³⁴ Cf. G. Ostrogorsky, "Die Chronologie des Theophanes im 7. und 8. Jahrhundert," *Byz.-Neugr. Jahrb.*, 7 (1930), p. 1 ff.

³⁵ Niceph., p. 31, 28; on p. 33 he repeats the statement that Constans II died in the West.

³⁶ Niceph., p. 29, 15.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 39, 12 ff.

morates, together with the names and years of the Byzantine emperors, those of the Persian king or the Arab caliph, which it does not occur to him to do in the case of any other foreign ruler.

The Empire's rivals in the Balkan peninsula constituted the other factor of chief significance in Byzantine external politics during the seventh century. For the Byzantines the Balkans were part of "the West", of "Europe" and indeed, they most frequently applied these terms to the peninsula. This was the European West which was of immediate concern and interest to them. However, the information given by Theophanes and Nicephorus about the Slavs is, once more, poor and scanty. The clashes with the Slavs were mostly of a local character at that time, and escape the notice of the Byzantine chroniclers, whose attention is turned towards the capital and who record only a few of the most important campaigns organized from Constantinople against the "Sclavinias."

The chroniclers have a good deal to say about relations with the Avars at the end of the sixth and the beginning of the seventh century. Here the central place is taken by the imposing figure of the Khagan Bayan whose name, however, is not given by either Theophanes or Nicephorus. After the unsuccessful siege of Constantinople by the Avars and Slavs in 626 and the subsequent decline of Avar power, dealings with them are pushed further into the background. From the year 680 onward relations with the Bulgars come to the forefront. Nicephorus and, more particularly, Theophanes have preserved a fairly detailed account of the appearance of Asparuch's tribesmen on the Danube and of the foundation of the Bulgar state in the northeastern part of the Balkan peninsula—an account which they take from a common source, contemporary with these events.³⁸ Both chroniclers likewise write at some length about relations with the Khan Tervel, who helped Justinian II regain the imperial throne, was dignified by him with the title of Caesar, and was enthroned beside him to receive the plaudits of the Byzantine population. Thereafter, relations with the young Bulgarian state occupy an increasingly large part of their narratives. Bulgaria quite clearly becomes the chief rival of Byzantium in "Europe," and has the same central importance in its external policy in the West as does the Caliphate in the East.

But, along with those peoples with whom Byzantium had continuous dealings during the seventh century, and with whom it was engaged in an almost constant struggle, the chroniclers also refer to a number of other countries and peoples of Eastern Europe and hither Asia. Some of Nicephorus' information about them is of particular interest. These Eastern peoples were an important factor in the political network surrounding Byzantium, and the story of its dealings with them serves to fill in the picture of its external politics at this time.

As early as the second half of the sixth century the Empire had begun relations with the Turkic nomads in Western Asia, and had exchanged diplomatic missions with them in the reigns of Justin II, Tiberius, and Maurice. Especially notable are the relations with the Bulgaric Onogur principality which

³⁸ Cf. J. Moravcsik, "Zur Geschichte der Onoguren," *Ungarische Jahrbücher*, 10 (1930), p. 70 ff.

had arisen in the Kuban region in the first half of the seventh century. It was without doubt the ruler of this so-called "great Bulgarian Kingdom" who in 619 visited Constantinople and there adopted Christianity. This prince, it would seem, was Orhan (Organas). Heraclius received him with great cordiality and became his baptismal father. Byzantine notables stood godfather at the baptism of his lieutenants, and their wives became godmothers of the converts' wives. All of the visitors were rewarded with gifts and honorary titles, and the Bulgar ruler himself was honored with the dignity of patrician.³⁹ Nicephorus calls him ὁ τῶν Οὐννων τοῦ ἔθνους κύριος, but does not mention his name, omitting it apparently through an oversight. There is good reason to believe that the name was given in his source, since further on Kuvrat, the ruler of the Hunnogoundours (ὁ τῶν Οὐνογονδούρων κύριος) is represented as being the nephew of Orhan, the latter name being mentioned as though it were already familiar to the reader.⁴⁰

This nephew is the celebrated Kuvrat, known both to Byzantine and Eastern historians and mentioned in the list of ancient Bulgar rulers, who has in modern times been the subject of a good deal of historical investigation. According to the indications of Nicephorus, Kuvrat revolted against the authority of the Avar Khagan and drove the Avars out of his country; he apparently succeeded because of the collapse of Avar power after the Khagan's defeat near Constantinople just as, at about the same time, the Croats succeeded in ousting the Avars from the western part of the Balkan peninsula, at the other end of the Empire. Having risen against the Avars, Kuvrat sent a mission to Heraclius and concluded a peace treaty with him "which they observed to the end of their lives," writes Nicephorus; furthermore, the Emperor sent him gifts and conferred on him the title of patrician.⁴¹ John of Nikiu reports that Kuvrat while still a child, had been baptised in Constantinople and brought up at the imperial court; apparently he had gone to Constantinople with his uncle Orhan and had been left there as a hostage.⁴²

³⁹ Niceph., p. 12, 20–28.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 24, 9. That Kuvrat was the son of Orhan's brother is also stated by John of Nikiu, ed. Zotenberg, p. 460.

⁴¹ Niceph., p. 24, 12–15.

⁴² This being so, there is no reason to conflate Nicephorus' references to two treaties, concluded with two different rulers of the Bulgars—one around 619; the other around 635—by eliminating the later one, as was done by Zlatarski, *Istoriја na bŭlgarskata dŭrŭŭava prez srednite vekove*, I, 1, 33 ff. The argument by which he justified this, viz., that after 626 the Emperor would have had no need of a treaty against the Avars, is very weak. On the other hand, there is no reason to suppose that both of the treaties mentioned by Nicephorus were concluded with Kuvrat, as does Grégoire, "L'origine et le nom des Croates et des Serbes," *Byzantion*, 17 (1944/5), p. 100 ff., for it is obvious that Kuvrat could not have received the title of patrician twice over, and, what is more, it is entirely clear from the narrative of John of Nikiu, upon which Grégoire himself places such emphasis, that Kuvrat was converted to Christianity before he had become ruler of the Bulgars. J. Marquart, "Die altbulgarischen Ausdrücke in der Inschrift von Čatalar und der altbulgarischen Fürstenliste," *Izvestija Russk. Archeol. Inst. v Konst.*, 15 (1911), p. 7, and esp. p. 21, was inclined to identify Orhan with the unnamed ruler of the "Huns" who visited Constantinople in 619, and he was followed in this by J. Kulakovskij, *Istoriја Vizantii*, 3 (1915) p. 91. Marquart himself, however, immediately rejected this very likely identification because it appeared to him incomprehensible that the name of Orhan, obviously well known to the Byzantines, should not be mentioned by Nicephorus under 619. But the matter is resolved quite simply if, as we have supposed, the name omitted by Nicephorus appeared in his source under 619, and this was the reason why Nicephorus, under 635, mentions Kuvrat as the nephew of Orhan. How little concerned Nicephorus was to bring his various references into harmony with each other may be seen, for example, in his later account of the five sons of Kuvrat, when he writes of the latter: Κοβρατός τις ὄνομα κύριος

It follows from this that Orhan, and not Kuvrat, must be regarded as the founder of Bulgarian power in the Northern Caucasus. It was also he who initiated the alliance with Byzantium. Kuvrat, when he in turn became ruler, strengthened this alliance by means of a further treaty, directed against the common enemy, the Avars. His personal relations with Heraclius, if we are to believe John of Nikiu, were so close that after the Emperor's death he intervened in the internal struggle that broke out in Byzantium, upholding the rights of Heraclius' widow Martina and her son Heraclonas.⁴³

The mutual interest of Byzantium and the Bulgar Onogur state in the Northern Caucasus, and the firm and friendly relations between the two powers are very characteristic of this period. Equally characteristic and remarkable are the close personal links which bound the Imperial court to the rulers of this barbarian state, who had associated themselves with the culture and religion of the Empire and had been completely drawn into the orbit of Byzantine politics.

Kuvrat, the ruler of the North Caucasian Bulgar State (Κούβρατος or Κοβρατος in Nicephorus, Κροβᾶτος in Theophanes, *Kurt* in the list of ancient Bulgar rulers, *Qetrades* in John of Nikiu, *Kuvrat* in Moses of Chorene) must not, in spite of Grégoire,⁴⁴ be confounded with the Kuver (Κοῦβερ) who appears in the *Miracula Sancti Demetrii*. The activities of the latter took place in an entirely different area, in the Balkans and Pannonia,⁴⁵ and relate to a later period.⁴⁶ But Kuver, though he was a vassal of the Avar Khagan, is another example of a barbarian chieftain who had close links with the Empire. Having been appointed by the Khagan to be leader of the Byzantine community which, drawn from all parts of the Balkans, had been settled in the region of Sirmium, in Pannonia, Kuver withdrew his allegiance from the Avar chief and, at the head of the Byzantine population subject to him, moved into Macedonia, and even sought, through a stratagem, to take possession of Salonica. In this he was greatly assisted by his lieutenant Maurus, who, in the words of the *Miracula* "was skilfull in all things and knew the Greek, Latin, Slavic, and Bulgar tongues," and whom the Em-

γινόμενος τῶν φύλων τούτων, p. 33. 16. Having rejected the correct identification which he himself had put forward, Marquart preferred the arbitrary supposition that the ruler who visited Constantinople in 619 was the chieftain of the Caucasian Huns or Hephthalites from Varachan in N. Daghestan, into whose country Heraclius was obliged to retreat in 625; in support of this he refers to Theophanes, 310, 19, who, however, simply mentions τὴν τῶν Οὐννων χώραν, without any more precise qualification.

⁴³ John of Nikiu, ed. Zotenberg, p. 460.

⁴⁴ Grégoire, *op. cit.*, p. 104 ff.

⁴⁵ This has been clearly shown by A. Maricq, "Notes sur les Slaves dans le Péloponnèse et en Bithynie," *Byzantion*, 22 (1952), p. 345 ff., whose conclusions are manifestly correct.

⁴⁶ Kuvrat died in the reign of Constans II (641–68): cf. Theoph., p. 357, 11; Niceph., p. 33, 17. Kuver's activity in Macedonia must be, however, dated to the time of Constantine IV (668–85). Cf. F. Barišič, *Čuda Dimitrija Solunskog kao istorijski izvori* (Belgrade, 1953), p. 126 ff. One consideration, in my opinion, is decisive: In the chapter in which he writes about Kuver (II. 5) the author of *Miracula*, II refers to the then emperor as "our Emperor" (τὸν βασιλέα ἡμῶν, Migne, PG, 116, 1376), "him who is ordained by God to rule over us" (τὸν ἀπὸ θεοῦ βασιλεύειν ἡμῖν λαχόντα, *ibid.*, 1365), i.e. to an Emperor who was still on the throne when Book II of the *Miracula* was being written. But it now seems to be generally recognized that this Book dates from the reign of Constantine IV. As for the resemblance between the names of the Bulgar Kuvrat and the Avar Kuver, such a coincidence, taking into account the fact that one common barbarian milieu extended over the whole area of Central and Eastern Europe, is in no way surprising. Without having to look far for another example, we may cite the eldest son of Kuvrat, who was called Bayan or Batbayan (Βαϊανός: Niceph., p. 33, 26; Βατβαϊᾶν: Theoph., p. 357, 19)—the same name as that of the great Avar Khagan.

peror, misled by his apparent submissiveness, honored with the title of consul (*hypatus*).⁴⁷

Similarly the Slavs and their leaders not only made war with Byzantium but, at times, were also in peaceful contact with the Byzantine population and might be found living on very amicable terms with them. The *Miracula S. Demetrii* tell the story of Pervud, chief of the tribe of the Rinkhinians, who had lived for some time in Salonica.⁴⁸ Naturally, as is explained subsequently, he spoke Greek. On the strength of a slanderous report he was arrested by the Prefect of Salonica and sent to Constantinople; whereupon a deputation made up of both Slavs and inhabitants of Salonica went to the capital and petitioned for the release of the unjustly arrested prince—a remarkable demonstration of this friendly relationship.

But we must return to the barbarian world beyond the Black Sea. The friendly alliance that bound the Empire to the old Bulgar-Onogur Kingdom against the Avars also linked it with the rising power of the Khazars—first against the Persians and later against the Arabs. With the Khazar principality, which was soon to replace the power of “Great Bulgaria” in the North Caucasus and in the lower Don-Volga region, Byzantine relations in the seventh and eighth centuries were especially friendly.

As early as the time of his great campaigns against Persia, Heraclius, having reached the Caucasus, sent gifts πρὸς τὸν τούρκων κύριον, as Nicephorus calls the Khazar Khagan, inviting this potentate to join in an alliance against the Persians.⁴⁹ The alliance was confirmed by a meeting between the two rulers. The Khagan came out to meet Heraclius with a numerous suite and, dismounting, both he and his retinue greeted the Emperor with a *proskynesis*. Heraclius addressed the Khagan as his son, placed his own crown on the Khazar ruler’s head and promised him in marriage his daughter Eudocia, “the Augusta of the Romans.” It is interesting to note that he also showed her portrait to the Khagan, who, on seeing it, was consumed with love for its “archetype.”⁵⁰ The proposed marriage did not take place because of the Khagan’s death.⁵¹ But later Justinian II, who spent some years at the Khazar court during the period of his exile, married the Khagan’s sister and after his restoration crowned both her and his son by her, making him his co-ruler.⁵² Constantine V was also wedded to a Khazar princess and his son, Leo IV, was known as “the Khazar.” These princesses were thus the first foreign-born Byzantine Empresses. The fact is noteworthy if we recall the haughty attitude of the Byzantine court concerning marriages between the imperial family and foreign dynasties. The alliance with the Khazar Kingdom became a most important factor in Byzantine policy during the early middle ages.

The Empire also entertained relations with the Caucasian tribes. At the time

⁴⁷ *Miracula*, II. 5.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, II. 4.

⁴⁹ Theophanes, too, considers the Khazars as Turks. Writing about this same treaty he calls them τοὺς τούρκους ἐκ τῆς ἑώρας οὓς χάλαραις ὀνομάζουσι (p. 315, 15; cf. pp. 407, 6, 11, 14; 433, 26).

⁵⁰ Niceph., pp. 15, 20–16, 20.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 21, 28–22, 2.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 43, 8; Theoph. p. 375, 28.

of his Persian campaigns Heraclius had already attracted a number of Caucasian chieftains into his camp, as both the Byzantine and the Armenian sources make clear.⁵³ Like Armenia, the Caucasian regions were a subject of conflict between Byzantium and Persia and, later on, even more vehemently, between Byzantium and the Arabs. In particular, Lazica, the ancient Colchis, was a crucially important area in Byzantine relations with both Persia and the Caliphate as well as with the northern nomadic tribes. The possessions on the south coast of the Crimea, centered around Cherson, were even more consistently important outposts. Although, with the increasing power of the Khazars, the greater part of Taurica came under their control at the end of the seventh century, Cherson remained Byzantine, and gave the Empire direct access to the wandering peoples of the East European plain, over whom a close watch was kept at all times.⁵⁴

Such was the environment of the Byzantine Empire in the seventh century; such were the partners—rivals and allies—of the Emperors of the Heraclian dynasty. In the East, their most powerful opponents were first the Persian kings and thereafter the Arab caliphs, beginning with Omar the Conqueror, and the great founder of the Umayyad Caliphate, Muawiya; in the Balkans, the Avar Khagans, headed by the terrible Bayan, the princes of the numerous “Sclavinias” who, though frequently at war with the Empire, were also at times in peaceful contact with it, and, from the end of the century onwards, the Bulgar Khans—Asparuch, the founder of the Bulgarian state in the Balkans, and Tervel, the ally and helper of Justinian II, who was honored by the Emperor with the appellation of Caesar. Beyond the Black Sea, the allies of the emperors against the Avars on one side and the Persians and Arabs on the other were the rulers of the old Bulgar-Onogur principality, Orhan and Kuvrat, baptized in Constantinople and granted the title of Byzantine patrician; and later on the Khagans of the Khazars, linked to the Byzantine court by treaties of alliance and by bonds of marriage as well; and finally, the semi-dependent princes of the many Caucasian tribes and the Armenian *Curophalati*.

Thus Byzantium in the seventh century had many strong ties with the Orient, not only with the world of Islam but also with the barbarian nations of Eastern Europe. This barbarian, semi-nomadic world was subjected to the Empire's cultural influence and brought into the sphere of its political schemes; its chieftains associated themselves with Byzantine civilization, and some of them even adopted its religion and formed ties of kinship with the Imperial dynasty.

⁵³ According to Moses of Kagankatvaci, Heraclius had dealings with the princes of Albania, Iberia, and Armenia and demanded “that they should go to him of their own accord and serve him with their armies in wintertime” (Russian trans. by K. Patkanian [St. Petersburg, 1861], p. 102; cf. German trans. in A. Manandian, *Beiträge zur albanischen Geschichte*, [Diss. Leipzig, 1897], p. 38). Theophanes, p. 309, 14, mentions the Lazi, Abasgians, and Iberians among the allies of Heraclius.

⁵⁴ A. L. Jakobson, “Vizantija v istorii rannesrednevekovoj Tavriki,” *Sov. Archeologija*, 21 (1954), p. 152 f., exaggerates a good deal when he speaks of a complete downfall of Byzantine power in Taurica from the seventh to the ninth century (i.e., to the creation of the theme of Cherson). On p. 154 of his interesting and useful paper he himself, however, notes “the balance of power rather favorable to Byzantium, which was established on the north coast of the Black Sea after the arrival of the Khazars, who afterwards, as is known, became the allies of Byzantium.” Cf. also his remark that the activity of the Christian church in Taurica reached “unprecedented proportions” in the eighth century.

Honored with Byzantine titles, they were brought into the hierarchy of the Empire and so were led to acknowledge that ideal sovereignty which resided in the Emperor. Byzantium was, in some sense, indisputably the head of all this diversified congeries of nations, and Constantinople was its center. But in the process of subjecting this barbarian world to its political and cultural influence, Byzantium became more akin to it, and was in turn subjected to its influences, adopted its manners, and took over its styles of dress and decoration. This was pointed out by N. P. Kondakov, who rightly emphasized that the world of the Eastern nomads played a historic role that is deserving of more attention than is usually devoted to it.⁵⁵

Byzantium, after the break-up of Justinian's Empire, was never again to be a world monarchy. But it continued to exert a very great influence, both political and cultural, on the world around it, an influence which expanded in the East as it diminished in the West. As we observed at the outset, Byzantium in the seventh century was far from being a unified body; it was made up of a number of clearly distinct parts, with varying outlooks and separate destinies. In Asia Minor the Empire stood firm and unshaken; here was the source of its external and internal strength and the bulwark of its reviving might. In the Balkan peninsula, its power, shattered by the Avar invasions and the Slavic colonization, was confined to a few towns in the coastal area, but from these few remaining centers began the gradual and partial restoration of that power; from them its cultural influence radiated out into the neighboring Slavic lands. In the West both the political power of Byzantium and its cultural influence were in a process of slow but steady liquidation. Finally, on the North coast of the Black Sea the Empire maintained its positions. From here it was able to exert an influence over the barbarian nations of Eastern Europe, with which in this period it had connections incomparably closer and more durable than it had with the alien and far-off West.

Byzantium in the seventh century faced eastward. This, however, does not mean that it became an "oriental" state, as is often asserted. We must not forget that catastrophe had fallen on the old Roman world-Empire both in the West and in the East; that it had lost not only its Western possessions but its Eastern provinces as well—these having now entered the orbit of Islam. Byzantium occupied a special place between the Romano-Germanic West and the Islamic East as a Greek state, which it finally became just at this time, in the seventh century. It did not, of course, become Greek either in the ethnic sense, since it remained multi-national, or in its political ideology, since it jealously preserved its claims to the inheritance of Rome. It became a state that was Greek in culture and language, and no longer resistant to the natural process of Hellenization, the victory of which had been assured long before by the transfer to the East of the center of the Empire, but which finally triumphed only after the collapse of the restored Roman Empire of Justinian.

⁵⁵ N. P. Kondakov, "Les costumes orientaux à la cour byzantine," *Byzantion*, 1 (1924), p. 7 ff., and *Očerki i zametki po istorii srednevekovogo iskusstva i kul'tury* (Prague, 1929), p. 61 ff. Cf. also J. Moravcsik, "Proischozhenie slova τῑπῑλάκιον," *Sem. Kond.*, 4 (1931), p. 69 ff.

At once Greek and medieval, seventh century Byzantium was in its general features strikingly different from the half-antique, half-Latin Empire of the preceding epoch, and, at the same time, was separated more and more clearly from the contemporary Romano-Germanic West. It was not the incursions from without, but the inherent process of cultural and linguistic separation that played the decisive role in the gradual estrangement between the Latin West and the Greek East, an estrangement which, after the unsuccessful endeavor made in the time of Justinian to re-unite the two worlds, found such clear expression in the seventh century.



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Byzantium and the South Slavs*

G. OSTROGORSKY

IT is a well-known fact that the imprint left by the Byzantine empire on the political and cultural development of the South Slav peoples was extremely strong. An empire with great political traditions and a mature culture, Byzantium radiated a powerful influence in the world surrounding it, attracting neighbouring peoples into its cultural and political orbit. The secular and ecclesiastical institutions of the countries bordering on Byzantium, their juridical, political and religious conceptions, their spiritual and material culture, all bear—to a greater or less extent—the hallmark of Byzantine influence.

It is not the present purpose to investigate which elements in the life of the mediaeval South Slav states had their roots in Byzantine culture, or how and to what extent Byzantium influenced the institutions of contemporary South Slav countries, their administration, their military organisation and techniques, their juridical order and legislation, their political ideas, religious and spiritual life, church-sponsored and heretical religious movements, their literature, arts, scientific and philosophical views. The problems of Byzantine-South Slav relations will be considered here from a different angle.

It was impossible indeed for any South Slav or, for that matter, any other European people (particularly in the south and east of the continent) not to yield to the influence of the ancient Byzantine empire. It was only natural, however, that the effect of this influence varied considerably from one country to another. Obviously the extent of Byzantine influence was largely determined by the geographical position of a given state. Some regions in the Balkan peninsula were entirely orientated towards Byzantium, while others gravitated to the west or wavered between these two spheres of influence. So, also, in some regions Byzantine influence was fully deployed, direct and irresistible, while in others its infiltration was less intensive because of the rival ascendancy of the west. Moreover some regions, notably the coastal areas, were by virtue of their location more easily accessible, and therefore more exposed, than others to outside influences.

This is not the whole problem, however. The relationships established in some South Slav states as a result of their own internal course of development contributed in a varying extent to the degree of

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intensity with which these countries absorbed Byzantine influence, adopted Byzantine patterns of behaviour and institutions. The intensity of Byzantine influence also depended on political conditions stemming from the actual course of political developments in the world. Some South Slav peoples maintained—in peace and war—permanent ties with Byzantium; others had only sporadic contacts with the empire. Again, some of these peoples were for long periods subjected to direct Byzantine rule, others were only Byzantium's vassals, or merely recognised its more or less formal right of supremacy.

If Byzantine-South Slav relations are viewed from this angle, it is possible to grasp many points in the development of the Balkan peoples more clearly, and to explain some things more precisely, provided, of course, that a distinction is always made between the actual domination of a people by the Byzantine empire and the recognition of its sovereignty—that is between direct and indirect, often merely formal, dependence.

When they came to settle on the Balkan peninsula, the South Slavs actually entered the territory of the Byzantine empire and occupied areas that had for centuries been Byzantine provinces. In these provinces, where the Slavs have lived ever since and where Slav states were formed at a later date, they certainly encountered many elements of Byzantine spiritual and material culture. The extent of this cultural inheritance that survived the decline of Byzantine domination of the Balkans depended on conditions actually prevailing at the time in the relevant part of the peninsula, and on the extent of the devastation caused by the Slavs. Ravaged by earlier invasions of Germanic and Hun tribes, the Balkan regions were reduced to complete ruin by the continuous powerful attacks of Slavonic tribes and of the Avars. The original population that had survived these invasions withdrew to the mountains and still more to the coast. The advent of the Slavs—their ever recurring invasions since the beginning of the 6th century and their final settlement in the closing years of the 6th and the first decades of the 7th century—produced a complete ethnical transformation and radically altered the face of the Balkan peninsula which became almost entirely a Slavonic land. They surged beyond the limits of present day Slav states in the Balkans and overflowed into parts of contemporary Greece at the southern end of the peninsula.

Certainly, no-one today thinks—as did the well-known writer Fallmerayer in his time—that the Greek population in the Middle Ages underwent complete slavonisation and that its Greek characteristics were obliterated in the process. Today, it would be quite unscholarly to support such a paradoxical theory. But it would be

equally unscholarly to deny that in the early Middle Ages Slavs represented the prevailing element in southern Greece. The Chronicle of Monemvasia reveals that the Slavs dominated the Peloponnese from the end of the 6th to the beginning of the 9th century when Byzantium finally succeeded in restoring its authority after an interval of more than 200 years. There is no real reason to question the reliability of this statement, which has indeed been confirmed by the most recent research and is supported by linguistic (toponymical) and archaeological evidence as well as by documentary evidence—to mention only the testimony of Constantine Porphyrogenitus who wrote of the Peloponnese in the middle of the 8th century: 'This land was slavonised and turned barbarian.'

Little by little Byzantium re-established its rule over the Greek provinces, as is evident from the Chronicle of Monemvasia itself, but it was a lengthy and painful process. The massive settlement of Slavonic tribes in the Balkans in the beginning of the 7th century had broken up the Byzantine domination of the peninsula. The Byzantine military and administrative mechanism was paralysed over the whole stretch from the Danube to the southernmost point of Greece and was only able to maintain its authority in some coastal towns.

Special emphasis should be placed on this total breakdown of Byzantine rule in the Balkans outside a few coastal towns, since its importance is often under-estimated. The true impact of the catastrophe that fell upon Byzantium in the Balkans at that time is not sufficiently realised. This is largely because Byzantine rule in the Balkans receded not before the advent of another organised state but under the pressure of the explosive drive of Slav expansion into provinces that had until then been governed by Byzantium.

The Balkan peninsula was now transformed into a number of 'sclavinias', as the Byzantine sources named the provinces occupied by the Slavs. The term 'sclavinia' (and this has only recently become clear to scholars) indicates a central concept in the early mediaeval history of the Balkans and characterises most aptly the situation that prevailed between the 7th and the 9th centuries. 'Sclavinias' were regions occupied by the Slavs over which Byzantium had lost all control but which did not possess any other administrative system that might have replaced the earlier Byzantine one. The peninsula was in fact lost to Byzantium, but the fiction of Byzantine sovereignty could continue to be maintained. However, this preservation of formal sovereignty over the lost Balkan lands does not reflect the real relationship and the actual state of affairs.

To find out what the real situation was in the Balkans at that time it is necessary first to see if there was, under the formal claim of

sovereignty, an actual Byzantine administration in these lands. Did the Byzantine administration still function there? It is not difficult to ascertain the facts. The Byzantine mediaeval provincial administrative system was invariably based on a division of territory into military and administrative units called 'themes'.

During the 7th century there were great upheavals in the internal history of Byzantium, and far-reaching reforms in its military and governmental structure. With the introduction of the system of 'themes', local government and the military organisation of Byzantium assumed a new character. The territory of the Byzantine empire had shrunk at that time: the Middle East provinces and Egypt were occupied by the Arabs and only Asia Minor, in spite of devastation, had withstood the attacks of the enemy. And it was in Asia Minor that the new military and administrative system was first applied during the first half of the 7th century. Here the first military districts—or 'themes'—were organised under the leadership of military governors—*strategi* invested with both military and civil authority, and here the foundations of the new military and civil order were laid which in time spread to other parts of the Byzantine empire and became the main basis of its power.

It is rather striking that in this first phase of the introduction of the 'theme' organisation it did not spread beyond the limits of Byzantine territory in Asia Minor: it was not yet introduced in the Balkan peninsula—obviously because it was not possible to do so at the moment, the Byzantine government on the peninsula having been completely disorganised as a result of the Slav invasion. The introduction of the 'theme' organisation was carried out here much later and its development was extremely slow. These two facts—the belated formation of 'themes' in the Balkans and the very slow pace with which the system was applied—strikingly characterise the situation in the Balkan areas after the Slavs had settled there. Too little attention is generally paid to this point, while too much is made of the question whether this or that province recognised officially the supreme sovereignty of the Byzantine emperor. Admittedly, this question is not uninteresting in itself, but its interest lies chiefly in the sphere of formal juridical relationships. The recognition of the supreme sovereignty of the emperor had only a formal and idealistic character which did not reflect real political relations or signify actual subordination to Byzantium. The true subordination, the actual establishment of Byzantine authority, came with the introduction of the 'theme' system. It must be stressed that, wherever there was Byzantine rule, there was also the 'theme' organisation; where there were no 'themes', no real Byzantine administration existed.

It is instructive to consider the development of the 'theme' system in the Balkan peninsula in the light of these conclusions. The first Balkan 'theme' came into existence in the ninth decade of the 7th century and was formed on the territory lying nearest to the Byzantine capital. This was the Thracian 'theme'. According to Constantine Porphyrogenitus it was founded when the Bulgarians first crossed the Danube, somewhere about 680. An official document dated 687 mentions, together with the exarchs of Ravenna and Carthage and the *strategi* of the four 'themes' in Asia Minor then in existence, the only military governor in the Balkans—the *strategus* of Thrace.

The Hellenic 'theme' was organised soon after. Its *strategus* is not mentioned in the above cited document of 687; his name appears for the first time in sources dating from 695. The Hellenic 'theme' did not comprise the whole territory of modern Greece as was until recently supposed. The latest research shows that it covered only the central portion of the present-day Greek territory—Attica and Boeotia. Thus, only two 'themes' had been created in the Balkans by the end of the 7th century: Thrace and Hellas. It was only in the immediate proximity of the capital and in central Greece that Byzantium was able to establish its military and administrative authority. All other parts of the Balkan peninsula remained beyond its reach. No further progress with the establishment of 'themes' in the Balkans was made for a long time and only much later, after a long and obdurate struggle, was Byzantium able to take the necessary steps to strengthen its position by introducing the 'theme' organisation in other Balkan districts. Towards the end of the 8th century, a hundred years later, the attempt to restore Byzantine authority in this area was renewed and began to gain momentum. The Macedonian 'theme' was created in the closing years of the 8th century. It should be stressed here that the name of this 'theme' may—and often does—provoke confusion. It has little in common with the Macedonia of classical times or with the present-day country of that name. The Byzantine 'theme' of that name comprised Western Thrace with Adrianopolis as its main city. The name of Macedonia was assigned to Thrace because at that time the true Macedonia had been lost to Byzantium: it was held by the Slavs and formed a conglomerate of 'sclavinias'.

At the beginning of the 9th century, 'themes' were organised in Dyrrhachium and Thessalonica. This was a particularly important step in the development of the 'theme' system and in the drive to strengthen Byzantine power in the Balkans, for Dyrrhachium was the main Byzantine citadel on the Adriatic and Thessalonica on the Aegean Sea. At the same time new 'themes' were formed in the Greek regions. The Peloponnesian 'theme' was apparently created

at the end of the 8th century. Then, or in the first years of the 9th century, the Cephallonian 'theme' was organised on the territory of the Ionian islands. Later, in the second half of the 9th century, a 'theme' was established in Epirus with its centre in Nicopolis. Finally, about 870, Dalmatia also acquired the status of a 'theme'. In this case also the Byzantine 'theme' does not correspond to the territory of modern Dalmatia, still less to the old Roman province of that name which had stretched inland on a broad front as far as the Drina River. The Byzantine 'theme' of Dalmatia included only the islands on the Adriatic Sea and the coastal towns—without the hinterland which was in the hands of the Slavs. Thus the restoration of Byzantine rule started in the first place from the urban centres on the coast.

This survey of the gradual organisation of the Byzantine administration on the Balkan peninsula illustrates a very important process—the gradual restoration of Byzantine rule in several Balkan regions from which it had previously been eliminated by the massive upsurge of Slav colonisation. The gradual re-occupation of certain areas by Byzantium and their cultural re-hellenisation can be followed in the step-by-step development of the 'theme' system. In the first two centuries following the advent of the Slavs this movement advanced very slowly. Later, however, it gained momentum, so that by the middle of the 9th century Byzantium was able to form a belt of 'themes' around almost all the shores of the Balkan peninsula in the east, in the south and in the west. But this was all. In these coastal regions, lying open to its sea-faring power, dotted with ancient urban settlements and ports (to which the former Greek and Roman population withdrew from the hinterland under the pressure of the Slav invasions) Byzantium finally restored its rule and by this means also its maritime supremacy, its 'thallasocracy'; the inland areas of the Balkan peninsula, however, remained beyond its reach and it is here that Slavonic states were then beginning to emerge.

This was actually the end of the era of 'sclavinias'. Where Byzantine power was restored, the 'sclavinias' were little by little absorbed by the Byzantine 'theme' system. In regions beyond the reach of Byzantine administration, 'sclavinias' now merged into the new Slavonic principalities. Thus the balance distorted by the invasions of the Slavonic tribes was restored on a new basis. At that time cultural zones were created which have continued to exist until the present day. The delimitation between the Byzantine and the Slavonic zones which was established then corresponds very closely with the cultural zones outlined by Jovan Cvijić, the great Yugoslav geographer, at the beginning of the 20th century. He had reached

his conclusions on the basis of studies of various types of rural settlements and dwellings. The zone to which Cvijić gave the name of 'Hellenic Mediterranean Zone' more or less falls within the territory covered in the 9th century by the Byzantine 'theme' organisation.

The lands of modern Yugoslavia lie largely outside this territory, and so does present-day Bulgaria which, in the 9th century, also held Macedonia after having incorporated the Macedonian 'slavinias'. The only exception is presented by Dalmatia, but it should be remembered that the Byzantine 'theme' of Dalmatia included only coastal towns (and islands) but not the Dalmatian hinterland. Thus the Byzantine reoccupation stopped on the periphery of the territories held by the Slavs. But now that these regions were surrounded by a chain of Byzantine 'themes', by a series of Byzantine strongholds in towns along their borders, Byzantine influence began to radiate inland into the Slavonic countries.

The political strengthening of Byzantium which had begun in the middle of the 9th century created the conditions which enabled it to spread its influence into the contemporary Slav world. From Constantinople and Thessalonica this influence spread far beyond the limits of the Balkan peninsula. One has only to remember the mission of the Thessalonicans Constantine-Cyril and Methodius to Moravia, with all its great consequences, and the beginning of Byzantine missionary work in Russia as described by Photius, its chief initiator, as well as the adoption of Christianity by Bulgaria—a development of great portent for Byzantium. It was accompanied by the sharp conflict between Constantinople and Rome—a hard struggle for predominance in the newly-converted Slavonic countries—which ended with the triumph of Byzantium. All these events fall within a period lasting only a few very important years in the history of the relations between Byzantium and the Slavonic world—an epoch marked by great Byzantine achievements, and characterised by a powerful spread of Byzantine cultural influence in the Slavonic area.

The same period witnessed a rapid infiltration of Byzantine political and cultural influence in the Serbian regions. The course of this penetration was both complex and peculiar. A decisive factor in the advance of Byzantine influence into the western parts of modern Yugoslavia, and in Serbia proper, was the strengthening of the Byzantine position on the Dalmatian coast and the establishment of Byzantine maritime supremacy on the Adriatic Sea. Byzantine influence in these regions originated more from Byzantine strongholds in Dyrrhachium and in various Dalmatian towns than from Constantinople. Its rapid penetration into these regions started when the Byzantine fleet liberated Dubrovnik from the blockade of

an Arab armada in 867, during the reign of Basil I. The Byzantine Dalmatian towns were then given the status of 'themes' and the position of Byzantium in southern Italy was further strengthened. In the wake of such an expansion of hegemony there naturally followed a marked rise of cultural and religious influence. During the reign of Basil I, Christianity triumphed in the remaining South Slav lands—as it had done somewhat earlier in Bulgaria (including Macedonia). However, the final consolidation of Christianity in the South Slav countries was achieved as a result of the activities of Methodius's disciples in the Balkans, notably the popularisation of the Slavonic church services and sermons and the spreading of education among the Slav population.

It is incidentally worth noting that, when setting out on the path to Christianity, far-away Moravia approached Byzantium for missionaries, while Bulgaria, the next door neighbour of Constantinople, turned to Rome on a similar quest. But as usually happens in the history of states, after many difficulties, conflicts and personal tragedies, the normal state of affairs was gradually re-established: Moravia, to which Christianity had been brought by Byzantine missionaries, was later attracted into the sphere of the Roman Church, a change dictated by its geographical position and political environment; the south-western portion of the Balkan peninsula (Slovenia, Croatia) also gravitated towards Rome; on the other hand Bulgaria, together with Macedonia, ultimately entered the Byzantine cultural sphere.

In Bulgaria, which attained the highest point of its development in the reign of Symeon (893–927), Byzantium found a powerful enemy and rival. Symeon claimed the title of emperor of the Romans, i.e. a primacy and leadership which had until then belonged to Byzantium. The history of south-eastern Europe in the second and third decades of the 10th century was overshadowed by the Bulgarian-Byzantine struggle for hegemony. The neighbouring South Slav countries very soon found themselves drawn into this dramatic struggle. In Serbia the cross-currents of influence of the two great states overlapped and conflicted; finally, Symeon enforced a solution by military means as a result of which Serbian resistance was shattered and the country reduced to ruins. When he made a further effort to invade Croatia, however, Symeon met with complete disaster, the worst defeat in his whole military career.

After Symeon's death in 927, which left Bulgaria exhausted by decades of incessant wars, Serbia, restored under Prince Časlav, recognised the sovereignty of Byzantium. This was how things stood when Constantine Porphyrogenitus wrote his well-known treatise on foreign policy in which he maintained, far from impartially,

that Serbia and other South Slav lands had always recognised Byzantine sovereignty and had never acknowledged the supremacy of Bulgaria.

Quite a new situation emerged, however, after the annexation of Bulgaria by John Tzimisces in 971, following upon the rising of the Cometopuli and the creation in Macedonia of a new empire under Samuel, which united almost all the Southern Slavs in opposition to the Byzantine empire. The heroic epic of this empire is well-known. After a protracted and strenuous struggle Byzantium emerged triumphant, having won one of the greatest victories in its history. With the annihilation of Samuel's empire, for the first time since the Slavonic invasions, Byzantium restored its hold over all the Balkan lands from the shores of the Sava and Danube rivers to the southern tip of Greece.

Yet the relations of these countries to Byzantium were by no means identical. In some regions the 'theme' organisation was introduced, which meant that they became Byzantine provinces under the immediate control of its military and civil administration. In other areas the 'theme' system was not set up and instead Byzantine suzerainty was imposed. The 'theme' system was established mainly in the central regions of Samuel's empire. A large 'theme' was created from Macedonia with the adjoining portions of southern Serbia and eastern Bulgaria and was called Bulgaria—after the empire of which it included the central part. Thus the heart of Samuel's former empire, Macedonia, was incorporated into the Byzantine empire and into its administrative system as a Byzantine province. Another 'theme' was created in the territory between the Danube and the Balkan mountains in Bulgaria—under the name of *Paristrion* or *Paradunavon*, i.e. the Danube 'theme' (which might have been formed after the annexation of 971). Further to the west along the Danube and Sava rivers another frontier 'theme' was apparently created whose centre was Sirmium. No other South Slav lands were included in the 'theme' organisation and consequently they did not become Byzantine provinces; they were only vassals of the Byzantine empire under the rule of their own princes.

The Chronicle of Scylitzes confirms that such was the actual position of Croatia; it states that the Croatian 'archontes' (the brothers Krešimir III and Tomislav) went to pay homage to the Emperor Basil II as to their sovereign, submitted their people to his power and received from him gifts and honorary titles. A perfectly clear indication of the status of other South Slav countries is contained in the chronicle of the presbyter of Dioclea. Describing the rebellion of the Zeta Prince Stefan Vojislav against Byzantium, the chronicler says that the Byzantine government invited the

feudal lords of Raška, Bosnia and Zahumlje to help to subdue the rebellious Zeta prince and promised them rich gifts as a reward. Thus the South Slav regions enumerated by the chronicler were not parts of the empire, they were not Byzantine provinces, but were governed by their own rulers. These were on the one side the unruly Zeta (Montenegro) which rose against Byzantine rule, and on the other side Raška (Serbia), Bosnia and Zahumlje (the present Herzegovina).

However strong the influence of Byzantium on these lands had been in the period immediately following the Byzantine victory, there was a very clear distinction between the vassal lands ruled by their own princes on the one hand, and Macedonia and Bulgaria on the other, which had been turned into Byzantine provinces governed by Byzantine governors and subordinated to their bureaucratic control. Although Macedonia revolted several times, it remained for centuries under Byzantium, developing as a Byzantine province under predominantly Byzantine influence. Thus the central Balkan region became the main protagonist of Byzantine culture in the Balkans. Bulgaria also remained under Byzantine domination for almost two centuries.

In the semi-dependent South Slav countries, however, the process of emancipation from Byzantine rule set in fairly soon. The first state to rise against Byzantine overlordship was the Zeta principality. Only a few decades after the fall of the Macedonian empire in the 11th century Zeta freed itself from Byzantine tutelage and extended its power to the neighbouring regions of Zahumlje and Travunia. At the end of the century, in the reign of King Constantine Bodin, Zeta became a flourishing state and extended its hegemony to Raška and Bosnia. As a result the focal point of opposition against Byzantium was transferred from Zeta to Raška. By the end of the 11th and the beginning of the 12th century Raška became the spearhead of all South Slav military action in the struggle against Byzantine domination. But though it was Raška that fought against Byzantium most fiercely, it was Raška that yielded to the influence of Byzantine culture most completely. The degree of influence is not determined by the friendliness of relations but rather by the intensity and continuity of contacts. Beginning in the 12th century the political aspirations of Raška were turned towards Byzantium; Serbia's expansion was directed against Byzantine provinces, its armies made constant inroads into Byzantine territory, where they continually came into contact with, and learned to know, various aspects of the Byzantine system of government and material and spiritual culture.

At the time when the Comneni dynasty reigned in Byzantium,

Raška offered the typical example of a vassal state. According to contemporary Byzantine historians (John Cinnamus and Nicetas Choniates), the emperor of Byzantium appointed and removed from office the Župans of Raška; these princes were required to recognise the Byzantine emperor alone as their sovereign and to remain faithful to him; they were also required to send to Byzantium auxiliary military units; insubordination, although it occurred very often in reality, was considered treason and rebellion. The enforced submission was expressed in certain pre-determined symbolic acts, to which the great Župan Stefan Nemanja, founder of the Nemanjić dynasty, was also subjected. After his rebellion against Byzantine authority and his defeat, the future liberator of Serbia was made to present himself in the military camp of the Emperor Manuel Comnenus barefoot, bareheaded, with a length of cord around his neck, holding his sword in the left hand, and to prostrate himself on the ground in front of the emperor.

After the reign of Basil II and the downfall of the Macedonian empire at the beginning of the 11th century, the age of Manuel Comnenus in the second half of the 12th century represented a new apogee of Byzantine power in the Balkans: Bulgaria and Macedonia were now entirely in Byzantine hands; large-scale rebellions, which had been frequent in Macedonia in the 11th century, had ceased; the ever troublesome Raška was finally subdued; moreover, after victorious wars with Hungary, Byzantium annexed Croatia, Dalmatia, the Srem region, and Bosnia. This new lease of life of the Byzantine empire proved, however, of somewhat brief duration: it ended in 1180 with the death of the Emperor Manuel. This short-lived revival of Byzantine rule did not leave any lasting traces in those regions in which Byzantine influence was not already deeply rooted.

After a long struggle, Raška definitely liberated itself from Byzantine sovereignty about 1180. A little later the Bulgarians also rose against the weakened Byzantium and formed the second Bulgarian empire. With the formation of independent Serbian and Bulgarian states the epoch of Byzantine hegemony in the Balkans was over. The weakening of Byzantine political control, however, did not by any means imply that Byzantium's cultural influence was also on the wane. On the contrary, it expanded in both Bulgaria and Serbia where the developments of the preceding centuries had created favourable conditions. Although the political climate underwent frequent changes, the Serbia of the period of Stefan Nemanja and of his heirs remained within the orbit of the Byzantine Church and the stamp of Byzantine culture became increasingly evident there.

The cultural physiognomy and orientation of a feudal state were moulded by the church; so was public and private life, and education, literature and the arts. That great fighter against Byzantine power, Stefan Nemanja, was a man of Byzantine cultural formation: he ended his days as the monk St Symeon in one of the monasteries on Mount Athos. His sons were also men of Byzantine views and ideals: not only Sava, the first archbishop of the autocephalous Serbian Church, but also Stefan who was crowned as the first Serbian king with a crown sent from Rome. Both of them wrote lives of their father Stefan Nemanja, which are completely in tune with the spirit of Byzantine hagiography.

The links between Serbia and Byzantium were not severed even after the fall of Constantinople and its occupation by the crusaders in 1204. Nicaea replaced Constantinople as the centre of Byzantine influence and close links were maintained with the Epirus-Thessalonican empire. St Sava was ordained archbishop of the autocephalous Serbian Church in Nicaea. During its apogee the influence of the Epirus-Thessalonican empire on Serbia and on its ruler King Radoslav, who was half-Greek and the son-in-law of the powerful Emperor Theodore, was immense.

The strengthening of Serbia at the end of the 13th century was marked by a continuous struggle with the Byzantine empire and was ultimately detrimental to Byzantium. But this only contributed to further consolidation of Byzantine influence in Serbia. This influence grew still stronger when, under King Milutin, the conquest of Byzantine lands by Serbia assumed more significant proportions and a number of Byzantine towns in Macedonia fell into the hands of the Serbs. It reached its highest point when Stefan Dušan conquered half the Byzantine empire, occupying almost the whole of Macedonia, Epirus and Thessaly. He subjugated the centre of Byzantine Christianity, Mount Athos, and proclaimed himself emperor, openly raising a rival claim to that of the Byzantine emperors and founding his own empire of Serbians and Greeks. In the newly annexed southern Greek regions where the centre of gravity of Dušan's empire was located, life preserved its Byzantine character and this could not remain without influence on the Serbian part of his realm.

In addition to Byzantine religious and cultural influences which had been at work for centuries before, the Byzantine state structure began to influence Serbia more and more with the increasing penetration of the Serbs into the Byzantine provinces in Greece, and their growing familiarity with Byzantine civil administration and financial and legal systems. Closer knowledge of the Byzantine institutions and way of life led Serbia to introduce them gradually

into its own lands since they suited the conditions prevailing in the Serbian feudal state of that time, the social structure of the country, the nature of supreme power in it, the relations of the monarch with the aristocracy and the church, and the relations between feudal lords and serfs. The adoption of Byzantine institutions and of many of their characteristic features was possible because of a certain similarity in the development of feudal relationships in Byzantium and Serbia and because of a certain affinity between the uppermost and the lowest strata in Byzantine and Serbian feudal society. Where such affinity did not exist, as for example in neighbouring Bosnia, the adoption of Byzantine institutional forms could not be carried out to the same extent. Thus, the Byzantine 'pronia'—the system of beneficiary granting of landed estates—gained great importance in the Serbian state, notably during Dušan's reign. It was preserved, after the downfall of his empire, in Serbia, Macedonia, Zeta, in the Greek provinces, in Epirus and Thessaly, and lived to flourish again in the period of the Serbian despotate in the 15th century. On the other hand, it failed to develop in Bosnia where the aristocracy was too powerful and too independent in its relations with the monarch to allow the introduction of a kind of conditional land ownership under the control of the supreme authority.

This survey has shown how varied and dissimilar were the relations between Byzantium and the different South Slav countries and peoples. The intensity and nature of these relations depended on many different factors. The influence of Byzantium was particularly intensive in those countries which had remained under Byzantine rule over long periods and were incorporated as provinces in the Byzantine empire such as for instance Bulgaria and particularly Macedonia. Macedonia was in fact the channel through which Byzantine cultural and political influence was disseminated and overflowed into the neighbouring Slav countries. During the greater part of her mediaeval—and also more recent—history Macedonia was ruled by one of the neighbouring states. With the exception of the heroic period of Samuel's empire, it did not have the opportunity to develop its own state institutions. But the importance of this central Balkan area in the historical development of the Balkan peninsula is extraordinarily great. It was constantly claimed by each of its more powerful and better organised neighbours and, as a rule, hegemony over the Balkans was concentrated in the hands of that Balkan state which happened to hold Macedonia at the time.

Apart from Macedonia, no part of present-day Yugoslavia was directly governed by Byzantium for any considerable time, or incorporated in the Byzantine empire. The other regions merely

recognised—for shorter or longer periods—the sovereignty of the Byzantine empire, which in accordance with changing conditions implied either actual or merely formal power. Still, Byzantium did also to some extent influence the development of cultural and institutional forms in these areas, in some more strongly, in others less so. In the western parts the influence of Rome predominated; in Serbia that of Byzantium was more marked, although that of Rome was far from negligible. Serbia never constituted a part of the Byzantine empire, never became a Byzantine province; and yet it is impossible to separate its mediaeval history from that of Byzantium. Of course, geography too played a very important rôle, but this is not the only consideration. The influence of Byzantium on far-way Russia—on Kiev and even Moscow—was extremely great. The intensity of this influence depended, even in one and the same country, at different times, on the historical climate, the actual political situation and, as a result of both these factors, on the duration and closeness of contacts that a given country had with Byzantium; it also depended on the internal conditions in the country itself, on the greater or less degree of affinity of its internal development with that of Byzantium. Receptivity to external cultural currents is neither an accidental nor a passive act. Cultural influences find a good soil in those places where suitable conditions are present; and such contacts have an active and fruitful effect only when they respond to the requirements of the *milieu* which is absorbing them.

CHAPTER V

Agrarian conditions in the Byzantine Empire in the Middle Ages

I. *East and West in the Roman Empire*

THE eastern half of the Roman Empire was economically stronger and more thickly populated than the western half, and it survived the crisis in which the latter perished, though only after the most exhausting and difficult external and internal struggles. For even the sounder eastern half of the Roman polity had the same troubles as the western half, and in spite of all their differences the political, as well as the economic, and particularly the agrarian, conditions were in many ways similar. The decline in the population did not make itself felt so severely in the East as in the West, while in the former with its overabundance of cities the growth of *latifundia* was accomplished more slowly. But here, too, for centuries development was affected by the marked shortage of labour and by the increase in private estates. And here, also, there were the same results—the widespread absorption of the state lands and of the small landowner, and the binding of the peasant to the soil. This process was vigorously opposed by the more highly centralized government of the East, but such opposition was limited by the financial needs of the state; and to the very end it remained unsuccessful.

These financial needs of the state were at all times responsible for the moulding of agrarian conditions in Byzantium. The taxation of Diocletian had imposed the hereditary ground tax on the peasant, and the so-called *capitatio-iugatio* which he created continued throughout the early Byzantine period, linking together the head and ground taxes. Regarded from different points of view *caput* and *iugum* denote the same taxable value: the *iugum* is the piece of land that can feed a *caput*, and the *caput* stands for the human labour expended on a *iugum*. And so the *capitatio*, just like the *iugatio*, is related to the actual soil, and a *caput* cannot represent either townsfolk or the landless. In the same way, a *iugum*, in order to be taxable, must have its corresponding *caput*. The efforts of the government were therefore of necessity directed towards keeping a balance between *iuga* and *capita*, by finding a *caput* for every available *iugum*. Owing to the scarcity of labour this was no light task, and it was for this reason that the exchequer made every effort to bind the *caput* when it was found to the corresponding

iugum. And so ever-increasing masses of the rural population were tied to the soil. This is a particular instance of the widespread compulsory fastening of the population to their occupation which scarcity of labour forced the later Roman Empire to pursue systematically. During the course of the fourth century the fettering of the *coloni*, even in the eyes of the law, appeared throughout the Empire; for financial considerations compelled the government increasingly to deprive the *coloni* everywhere of their freedom of movement.

Above all, the overburdening of the rural population with taxes hastened the *patrocinium* movement. In order to mitigate the pressing demands of the state the small landholder put himself under the protection (*patrocinium*) of a powerful lord, and in return placed himself and his land at the service of his patron. The Roman and Byzantine emperors vigorously opposed this development and fought it for many centuries, often with very severe measures. Yet it was the government itself, driven by financial and military needs, which had handed over the peasants to the landowners. To ensure the tax returns, it had entrusted the collection of taxes from the *coloni* to the landowners, and for the army's sake had made them responsible for recruiting the *coloni*. The dependence of the *coloni* was the inevitable result of the landowners' responsibility for their tax returns and their military service. The *coloni*, legally free, lost their freedom of movement and became the serfs of the large landowners (*glebae adscriptitii*, ἐναπόγραφοι).

Even in Egypt, relatively the most densely populated part of the Empire, both small freehold peasant property and the once enormous crown and state domains were systematically absorbed by large private landowners. The land of the imperial domain could not find the necessary labour, and the crown resorted more and more to compulsory leasing of its deserted estates. In Egypt the system of the so-called ἐπιβολή (*adiectio sterilium*) had been established from the earliest times. Under it the inferior state land was assigned compulsorily to private landowners (*proximi possessores*) to work, and they were forced to undertake the responsibility for the return of the tax levied upon the property allotted to them. From the close of the third century this system was employed throughout the Empire, and it was soon used, not only for state land, but also for deserted and dilapidated estates of private owners who were unable to answer for their taxes. But such a method could only succeed if those to whom the land was allotted had the necessary economic resources, and so this system, too, ended by contributing towards the increase of large estates. All along the line it was the large landowner who won, and who not only economically checkmated the crown but gradually monopolized important functions of the state.

The struggle against large landed property which the central authority had prosecuted with great vigour, even in Justinian's time, was unable to bring about any fundamental change in conditions. The predominating feature of rural economy in the early Byzantine period was the great private estate. Great landowners and their dependent *coloni* were the typical figures of the age.

II. *The free peasant village in the middle Byzantine period*

From the seventh century onwards the Empire entered upon a completely new phase of development. Economic and social, as well as political and cultural, conditions showed an entirely different aspect. The period of the later Roman Empire comes to a close, and the history of the medieval Byzantine Empire begins. The Byzantine polity which had survived the collapse of Justinian's work of restoration and the invasions, first of the Persians and then of the Arabs, underwent an internal regeneration. Byzantium had suffered greatly in territory; for Roman Mesopotamia, Syria, Palestine, and the granary of Egypt, were lost to the Arabs. But the very limitations imposed by the new frontiers gave the Byzantine Empire greater stability and internal unity; it had new and much firmer foundations on which to build. The system of government and the administrative divisions of the provinces, the financial arrangements and the organization of the army—all this was new. Socially the character of the Empire changed, and henceforth its economy stood upon a new basis.

It was the great Emperor Heraclius (610–41) who breathed fresh life into the ageing Roman Empire and restored it by his decisive reforms. His institution of themes not only created a new system of administration and a new military organization, but it turned the course of Byzantine agrarian development into fresh channels. Just as the binding of the peasant to the soil in the earlier period was due primarily to financial and military needs, so in the middle Byzantine period was his freedom of movement markedly encouraged by the new organization of the army and the alterations in the system of taxation. Heraclius's institution of themes introduced a strong military element into the imperial administration. The Empire was divided into large military districts—the themes—and each was placed under a governor (*strategus*) who controlled both the military and the civil government of his province. But most important of all were the military settlements within the newly created themes; the so-called 'military estates' (*στρατιωτικὰ κτήματα*) came into existence and were granted out in

return for military service. While the army of the early Byzantine period was largely composed of troops of foreign, and mostly Teutonic, origin, Byzantium now gradually recruited its soldiers from within the Empire. A peasant militia drew from its own soil both the means of livelihood and the resources for waging war.

This creation of military estates shows that it was in Asia Minor, then the backbone of the Empire, that enough unoccupied land was to be found. This is not surprising after the devastating invasions of the Persians and Arabs, which must have swept away so many large land-owners. Heraclius's successors continued his work, and in order to colonize the military holdings in Asia Minor they brought into the Empire many elements of foreign, and especially Slavonic, origin. For several centuries to come this institution of military estates by Heraclius and his successors was the very foundation of Byzantine military power. It was a system that afforded great relief to the budget and solved the terrible problem that had arisen after the great barbarian migrations, when the Empire found that the sources from which its army had formerly been recruited were no longer available. It had the further advantage of establishing an important body of free peasants in the Byzantine provinces; for, while the eldest son of a soldier (*stratiotes*) succeeded to his father's duty of military service, the rest of his offspring swelled the free peasant forces which could be occupied in the clearing of untilled ground. Thus a free peasantry developed side by side with the soldiers settled on the land, and, as the latter were the mainstay of the military, so the former, in their capacity of taxpayers, were the backbone of the economic and financial power of the Byzantine Empire. There was neither economic nor social difference between the tax-paying free peasants and the soldier peasants owing military service, who had moreover to pay certain taxes. Economically the military holdings were exactly like the peasant holdings, and socially the soldiers and the free peasants belonged to one and the same class. They were frequently placed in the same administrative and fiscal grouping and were treated by the imperial legislation as a single category.

Although Byzantium certainly had uncultivated land in the Middle Ages, it did not then suffer from so serious a scarcity of labour as it had in the earlier period. This indeed is largely due to the extent to which foreign elements had settled within the Empire and given it new vigour. It was moreover this fact which made possible a fundamental alteration in the system of taxation. In the place of the interdependence of the *capitatio* and the *iugatio* there was a separate levy of head and ground taxes, from the seventh century onwards. The head tax, which appeared in the form of a personal tax levied on the family (really a hearth tax: *καπνικόν*), fell on all taxpayers without exception. It was no longer

levied on the assumption that it was related to the occupation of a definite unit of land, and the exchequer was therefore no longer concerned to the same extent as formerly with the binding of the taxpayer to the soil. And so from this time onwards there is an abatement in the restrictions placed upon the rural population.

The appearance of a solid stratum of free and free-moving peasants is most clearly revealed in the famous Byzantine Peasants' Law (*νόμος γεωργικός*) that was drawn up, certainly at the end of the seventh century, and in all probability under Justinian II (685-95).¹ The Law is assuredly not to be regarded as an act intended to do away with the peasants' obligation to the soil. There was no question of any general repeal of this by means of legislation; on the contrary, the strengthening of the free and free-moving peasantry in this central period, as explained above, was the result of a complicated development conditioned by many different factors. The Peasants' Law has a more modest object: it sets out a number of regulations for the protection of both mobile and immobile peasants' property. But it undoubtedly takes account of a free and mobile peasantry, and hence its special historical value, for it supplies the evidence for the existence at the time when it was drawn up of a large population of such independent cultivators within the Byzantine Empire. The mobile peasantry who had as good as disappeared in the early Byzantine era had now become so important that it was necessary to draft a law particularly relating to them. It is true that there were always serfs in Byzantium, just as there were always powerful secular and ecclesiastical landowners; but, while in the early period it is the great landowner and his soil-bound *coloni* who completely dominate the picture, the Byzantine provinces are now increasingly characterized by small free-peasant holdings.

If we combine the evidence of our sources we get the following picture of the free Byzantine peasant in this central period. As in the West, so in Byzantium we find two main types of peasant settlements: the nucleated village (*τὸ χωρίον*) and the separate farmstead (*ἡ κτήσις*). In the case of the isolated farmstead the peasants' property was not in scattered plots and the arable land lay immediately round the farm buildings. It was a self-contained farming unit, a kind of hamlet, comparable to the later Russian *chutor*. But the far more common type of settlement was the nucleated village. In the middle of its land stood

¹ Scholars still disagree on the question whether the mention of Justinian in the title of the Peasants' Law is to be regarded as an erroneous allusion to Justinian I, or, rather, as Vernadskij, *Byzantium*, II (1925), 169 f., suggests, as a reference to Justinian II. In the solution of this disputed point the decisive factor seems to us to be that the majority, and certainly the oldest, manuscripts give the Law as an extract *ἐκ τοῦ Ιουστινιανοῦ βιβλίου* (singular), whereas if Justinian I had been meant one would certainly expect to find *βιβλίων* (plural).

the little group of peasants' houses lying close to one another, with their farmyards and vegetable gardens. This was the centre round which the peasants' property was grouped, the arable land, the vineyards, and so on. Their land (*στάσις*) was usually divided up into several little fragments (*μερίδες, κατατομαί*) which lay scattered in different places. Like the orchards and vegetable gardens, the vineyards were as a rule fenced. The arable land usually did without any fencing, but there is no doubt that it was in every way the hereditary property of the individual peasants. According to the older theories, the village community in Byzantium was characterized by communal ownership and periodical sharing out of all the village land, the individuals to whom it was allotted being allowed only a limited use of it for a stated period. It is necessary therefore to lay special emphasis on the fact that, as in the Roman, so in the Byzantine Empire, property and land were always hereditary and individual possessions. The holder, even if he were merely a peasant living in a village, had complete and unlimited legal right of disposal over his land. The Byzantine sources show quite clearly that peasant land was handed down from generation to generation by inheritance and that it could be freely alienated by the possessor just as he chose—by sale, by gift, or limited lease.

Besides the arable land and the vineyards which were the personal property of individual peasants, there was the unallotted land. It was usually pasture land and woods which remained unallotted, but sometimes there was other land which seemed less suitable for cultivation or was for the moment superfluous. If necessary this could also be parcelled out to individuals to be absorbed into separate economic units and to become their private and irrevocable property. When our sources speak of dividing the land, it is not, as we used to suppose, a question of periodically apportioning all the village lands, but of a subsequent parcelling of the land originally left over because it was not needed. These allotments had the effect of assisting the ordinary process of bringing the land gradually under cultivation. As we have already emphasized, in the early medieval period the Byzantine Empire had an increasing amount of cultivable land that was not in use. The problem of how to satisfy the desire for land had not yet arisen. It was only a question whether the capital and the equipment necessary for bringing fresh land under cultivation were available.

The tilling of his fields was the chief occupation of the Byzantine peasant and the chief support of his existence; but the vineyards were also of great importance. Most peasants seem to have possessed vegetable gardens, and beekeeping was very general. Cattle breeding played a prominent part. It was the possession of cattle more than anything else that was the measure of a man's wealth. As the pasture land mostly

remained undivided, the cattle of all the inhabitants of the village grazed together, under the care of the village herdsman, who was paid by individuals in proportion to the number of their cattle. And then there were the village mills—both windmills and water-mills—which generally belonged to the whole village community. Craftsmen, who very often played such an important part in the villages of the neighbouring Slavonic towns of the Balkans, are practically never to be found in the Byzantine villages. This is accounted for, not so much by the fact that the Byzantine peasants supplied their necessary domestic equipment, their tools, their clothes and so on, from within their household (for to a great extent the Slavonic and the West European peasants did the same), but rather by the fact that Byzantium was much richer in cities, and the village therefore stood in closer relation to the town where the peasant could satisfy his needs. Moreover, markets were held periodically in the country districts, and these facilitated exchange between village and town and probably held a significant place in agricultural life. The privilege of holding a market gave the district thus favoured a considerable advantage, and there seems to have been not a little dissension over the fixing of the sites for country markets.¹

There was naturally a great deal of difference in the amount of property held by individual peasants. There were the big peasants, who had fine holdings, cultivated valuable crops, possessed large herds of cattle and even slaves, bought land or took it on lease. Then there were very poor peasants who could not work their land and who tried to lease it. In such cases it was usually a question of a short-period lease arranged on the metayer system (*ἡμίσεια*), whereby half the yield went to the tenant and the other half to the owner of the land. In the case of a long lease for the more valuable kinds of cultivation (*μορτή*) the tenant (*μορτίτης*) kept nine-tenths of the produce. At least that is according to the provisions of the Law. But the facts that questions arising from this kind of arrangement must have become specially acute, and that the Peasants' Law expresses the regulations relating to it in biblical phrases, indicate that this principle was not always adhered to. In any case there are frequent instances of the payment of the tithe by the lease-holder, but to all appearances the arrangements varied appreciably, according to the respective economic and social positions of the tenant and the owner. With the development of a money economy rent was increasingly, and in later times almost exclusively, paid in money, which meant that the terms varied very much and were arranged to suit individual needs. When state land was leased the rent (*πάκτον*) was simply treated as a tax, and there was practically no difference between the government tax and the rent.

¹ Cf. Basil II's novel of 996 (*Zepos*, *Jus*, I, 271 ff.).

The superfluous energies of the richer peasants were employed in bringing under cultivation additional land outside the village boundaries. If a peasant had the necessary capital and equipment it was not unusual for him to leave the village and settle down outside its territory, building himself a house and transferring thither his activities. So there arose on the outskirts of the village individual properties with their own buildings, very like the hamlets of the separate farm settlements which we have already mentioned. Sometimes these were fairly small peasant holdings (*ἀγρίδια*) worked by the owner, but sometimes there were also large estates (*προάστεια*) run with slaves or small lease-holders. These new settlements and the formation of individual properties of this kind were frequently caused by the division of inheritances; some of the heirs would retain the old farm in the village, while the rest would found for themselves separate new farmsteads outside the village boundaries. If, however, economic resources did not run to this, and provided that none of the heirs went into the city as day-labourers, or to other men's farms as farmhands, if, in fact, all the heirs stayed in the village, then they either worked the family land jointly, or undertook to divide it. This last arrangement naturally led to further splitting up of peasant property, and in time this subdivision and scattering seems to have reached extraordinary proportions. To remedy this evil a procedure somewhat like the present-day 'cleaning-up of the fields'¹ was adopted. This was used particularly in cases where a peasant's property lay in two different villages, when, at the peasant's request, the government official would transfer it, so far as possible, to one place.

This complicated village formation, with the compact central settlement, the confused patchwork of peasant-owned plots lying around it, the unallotted commons and fallow land, and the individual estates on the outskirts, all went to make up a commune. This commune (*κοινότης, ἀνακοίνωσις, ὁμάς, μετουσία*) represented, however, not so much an economic, as an administrative and fiscal unit. It possessed economic functions only in so far as the inhabitants of a village were naturally united by economic interests and joined together to protect them. Moreover, the self-governing rights of the Byzantine village community were of a very limited nature, for nothing took place in a Byzantine village without government supervision and even the most trivial matters of daily life were controlled by the government officials. The tax inspector (*ἐπόπτης*) visited the village for regular and periodically recurring inspections as well as for extraordinary ones made necessary by special circumstances. He undertook the measuring and valuation of the land, and not only levied the general tax on the village

¹ *Feldbereinigung*: the technical German term for that rearrangement of holdings which in England accompanied the enclosure of open fields.

district, but also assessed the taxes of the separate members of the commune. He was naturally also responsible for deciding all remissions and reductions in taxation, for defining their extent and the time allowed for payment, all of which involved a thorough examination of the circumstances of the taxpayers. He also ratified the transfer of property in cases of inheritance and division among heirs, or of purchase and gift, in order to transfer the taxes to the new owner or to allocate them among the heirs.

The financial factor was of primary importance in deciding the character of the Byzantine commune. The Byzantine village community was a fiscal unit. The village formed a fiscal district (*ὑποταγή χωρίου*) and a general tax (*ῥίζα χωρίου*) was laid upon it, which was then distributed among the individual properties. All property which shared in the payment of this general tax was part of the commune; moreover, the owners of individual estates, who had cut themselves off from the village and carried on a separate economic existence, were members of the village community, in that they had a share in the fiscal burden of the mother-village. On the other hand property exempt from the tax was separated from the commune, even though it lay within the boundaries of the village; and further, if property lying among the peasant-owned plots was taken possession of after the valuation and taxing of the village and then subsequently burdened with a special additional tax (*προσθήκη*) and separately inscribed in the tax books, it did not belong to the commune, but was considered as a separate 'independent' property (*ιδιόστατον*). This was a characteristically Byzantine feature. It is true that in actual fact the 'independent' properties were mostly large estates. But that was not the deciding factor, for this 'independence' was a purely technical one for fiscal purposes. In connexion with this classification, the ownership of the property, its size, the position of the plots, their condition or economic resources—all that was immaterial. One thing only was important: it had to form a special fiscal unit, whether by reason of carrying a special tax and being inscribed in the tax book under a special heading, or by being exempt from taxation and—in the case of complete exemption for an indefinite period—removed from the registers.

The members of the commune were responsible as a body (*ἀλληλεγγύως*) for the payment of the taxes. If a peasant lapsed into poverty or abandoned his property, then another, generally his neighbour, had to pay his taxes for him and thus acquired the right of usufruct on the land in question. But if the absent man paid his taxes regularly his property remained inviolable. He who paid the taxes was the possessor. This typically Byzantine principle became fully developed in this period in the so-called *allelengyon* system, which represented a continuation,

and at the same time a variation, of the late Roman system of the *epibole*. For, if in the late Roman period, as a result of the serious scarcity of labour, the forced transfer of fallow land was the primary consideration and the imposition of the burden of taxation only a consequence, in medieval Byzantium it is the additional tax which is the decisive factor and the transfer of property the inevitable and logical result.

The *allelengyon* system of payment imposed excessively heavy charges on the peasantry, and this sufficiently explains why membership of a village community was considered burdensome, and why a peasant usually preferred to own a detached property.¹ The taxes were extraordinarily heavy, quite apart from the *allelengyon*, and the additional liability, not only for one's own taxes, but also for those of others, frequently ruined the people upon whom it fell. When the government levied the *allelengyon* on abandoned property, this more often than not had the effect of forcing the decision to emigrate upon those who had so far remained behind, simply because they could not face this extra burden. To prevent the withdrawal of even more taxpayers and greater depopulation than ever, the government found itself forced to give up taxing abandoned property and to remit any such payments, that is, to annul the *allelengyon*. If the absent owners did not return within thirty years this remission of taxes was transformed into a final exemption, and so there appeared the exempt property (*κλάσηματα*, later known as *ἐξαλειμμένα*), which was thus cut off from the village community. This phenomenon was already known as early as the seventh century, and after the tenth it seems to have become particularly widespread. The appearance of exempt property actually meant the gradual break-up of the system of paying extra taxes, and, although this was still legally and theoretically valid, yet it usually proved unworkable in practice. The rights of ownership over exempt land fell to the state, which could sell, lease, or grant it. Such property was usually lost to the peasant village, for it can scarcely be supposed that the peasant who himself, or whose ancestors, had been unable to take over property merely because of the liability for payment of taxes would, thirty years later, have been in the position to purchase it or even to take it on a lease. This was only possible in exceptional circumstances, and generally the exempt property, when it did not remain in the possession of the state, fell into the hands of the great landowners; and this is one of the factors which contributed to the disintegration of the peasant village communities and the absorption of peasant-owned land into the great estates.

When an important landowner had obtained a plot of ground lying

¹ In this connexion cf. the interesting remarks in the novel of Constantine VII Zepos, *Jus*, I, 216).

in the middle of a village it was only natural that he should attempt gradually to buy up the land round about and that the neighbouring small owners should become first economically and then legally dependent on him. Another factor which accelerated this same process was the direct alienation of different parts of the village to secular or ecclesiastical landowners, either by sale or long-term lease or as a gift. Men who took monastic vows usually made over their property to the monastery, and very often the devout Byzantine before death bequeathed his personal and real estate to a monastery. Thus the great landowners penetrated into the village, the secular lord above all through purchase, the ecclesiastical through purchase but also very often through bequest.

III. *The struggle to preserve the small landowner in the tenth century*

At the beginning of the Middle Ages when the Byzantine Empire had emerged from the turmoil of the invasions of both the barbarians and the Arabs it showed a lack of economic and social differentiation. But this marked a period of transition. Gradually once more a definite class system and, at the same time, the development of great landed estates became noticeable. As early as the end of the eighth century we see the rise of various powerful families, but by the end of the ninth and the beginning of the tenth centuries the aristocracy had so much power, and had succeeded in being recognized as a privileged class to such an extent, that it claimed to fill the higher positions in the army, and was able, by the repealing of older laws, to secure for itself important economic privileges.¹ The marked capacity of this class for economic expansion found its real outlet in agriculture. In Byzantine cities commerce was so strictly controlled that there was little scope for private initiative; trade and industry were regulated down to the smallest detail, and jealously supervised by the government. The only outlet for the development of private enterprise on a large scale or for the use of superfluous capital was in the acquisition of rural estates. The 'powerful' men (*δυνατοί*), as the more important and economically stronger elements of Byzantine society were called, greedily consumed the property of the 'poor' (*πτωχοί, πένητες*). They bought up the holdings of peasants and soldiers, and made their owners dependent upon them.

This was very dangerous for the Byzantine state, for both its financial

¹ *Tactica Leonis*, ed. Vari, II, § 25. Cf. also II, § 17 ff.; IV, § 3; *Nov. Leonis*, 84, 114, ed. Zepos, *Jus*, I, 152, 186.

and its military strength depended on the existence of the small freehold peasant property. The reduction in the number of peasant holdings meant that the state lost its best taxpayers, the decline of the military holdings that it was deprived of its soldiers. The system created by Heraclius, which was responsible for the strength of the medieval Byzantine state, began to be undermined, and the danger of the feudalization of the Empire was in sight. The Byzantine emperors were very well aware of what was at stake. They strenuously attempted to protect the small peasant-owner and they vigorously opposed the forces of feudalism. And so there began a bitter struggle between the rising owners of great estates and the central authority, a struggle which lies at the heart of the whole development of internal politics in the Byzantine Empire of the tenth century. It is both the most important and the most dramatic phase of Byzantine agrarian history, and it determines not only the later evolution of agrarian conditions, but also the fate of the Byzantine Empire.

The imposing legislation of the Byzantine emperors for the protection of the small landowner began with the novel of Romanus I Lecapenus (919-44). This law of April 922 first of all restored the old pre-emption right of the neighbours (*πρωτίμους*) which Leo VI (886-912) had restricted in the interests of the landed nobility, and it formulated this institution in a new and significant way. In cases of the sale of peasant land five categories were to enjoy the right of pre-emption in this order of preference: (1) relatives who were joint owners; (2) other joint owners; (3) owners of plots mixed up with the property to be sold; (4) owners of adjoining plots who were jointly responsible with the seller for taxes; (5) other owners of adjoining plots. It was only when all these declined to purchase that the land might be sold to outsiders. This system was intended to protect the small landowner from being bought out by the 'powerful' and at the same time to prevent further subdivision. The 'powerful' were to have no right whatsoever to obtain further possession of peasant land, except in cases where they owned property in the villages concerned (which might, as we have seen, easily be the case as a result of the purchase of an exempted property, thus giving the 'powerful' a pretext for the further buying up of peasant land). Moreover, they might not accept gifts and legacies from 'poor' men, unless they were related to them. He who was convicted of breaking these regulations was to restore the purchased property without being compensated and in addition to pay a fine to the state treasury, provided he was not protected by a ten-year, or in the case of a military holding even a thirty-year, prescription.

This act, in spite of its severity, did not have the desired effect. As a result of the long and severe winter of 927-8 the empire was afflicted

with an extremely bad harvest and there were outbursts of terrible famine and devastating plague. The 'powerful' profited from this time of distress, for they bought up the land from the starving populace at ruinously low prices or took it in return for providing food. This led to Romanus I's novel of September 934, when the emperor denounced with the utmost severity and bitterness the selfish greed of the 'powerful', who had 'shown themselves to be more merciless than famine and plague'. Yet he did not insist on a general restitution of all purchased property, as one would have expected from the strict prohibitions of the law of 922. It is true that all gifts, legacies, and similar transfers were declared invalid, and in addition all property had to be restored without compensation, if it had been bought for a sum less than half its fair price. But if it were a question of legal sale, then the return of the property was conditional on the repayment of the purchase price within three years. As far as the future was concerned, Romanus renewed the prohibition of any acquisition of peasant land by the 'powerful', while he insisted that land already acquired should be returned freely to the former owner and a fine paid to the state treasury. This, however, was for the future, and it is clear from the novel of 934 that, in spite of the stern tone, the government measures could not be applied with the severity anticipated. It may be safely assumed that a great deal of the peasant property acquired during the famine remained in the hands of the 'powerful', for it may certainly be doubted whether a peasant who had been forced by distress to sell his land would be able in three years to get together the amount necessary for the repayment of the purchase price. Even in the case of illegal purchase which, according to the requirements of the law, should have been followed by gratuitous restoration of the acquired property, it is doubtful whether the peasant was always, or even generally, given back the rights over his property, for it must be realized that the men who were open to conviction for illegal purchase would usually be the local officials placed over him, or their relatives and friends.

In fact not only did the 'powerful' retain their position, but the buying-up of peasant property continued, and the successors of Romanus I had to issue new laws and to take even stricter measures for the preservation of the small landowner. Constantine VII (944-59), after he alone was in control of the government, in his law of March 947 forbade once more the purchase of peasant land, and insisted on the free restitution of illegally acquired property. Then when land was sold by the 'powerful', other things being equal, peasants were to enjoy the right of pre-emption. Yet for previous purchases the rule which provided for repayment of the purchase price in cases of restitution still held good; though it is, however, true that the law of 947 freed the poorer

sellers whose resources were less than 50 gold pieces from this obligation.¹ But later, as we learn from a novel of his son, the 'powerful' exerted pressure to compel Constantine VII to revoke these prescriptions and to content himself with prolonging the period for the repayment of the purchase price from three to five years.

The Byzantine central authority was naturally most eager to protect the military holdings. These were in the same position as the peasant holdings, and came, on the whole, under similar regulations. A law of this same Constantine VII emphasized the inalienability of the lands from which the soldiers derived their livelihood and means of equipment. And indeed the holdings of both the mounted soldiers and the marine troops of the themes were said to have been worth at least four pounds of gold, and those of the paid sailors of the imperial fleet two pounds each (according to other statements from five to three pounds). The regulations by which illegally acquired military holdings might be taken from the purchasers without compensation were to be strictly observed, and, moreover, it was not only the former owner who might claim the restitution of the military holding, but also, according to claims of priority, the relatives up to the sixth degree, then those who were jointly responsible for the labour or military services, as well as the poorer soldiers who paid their taxes jointly and, finally, the peasants who belonged to the same fiscal district. The period of uncontested possession necessary for land that had formerly been a military holding was lengthened to forty years.

But it was useless. Just as Constantine VII had had to repeat the provisions of his father-in-law, Romanus I, so his son, Romanus II, had to introduce new laws to prohibit this buying-up of peasant and military holdings which had so often been forbidden. If imperial legislation shows an ever-increasing severity, the great landowner's urge to expand seems even more overwhelming. The central government could only slow down the absorption of the small landowner, it could not suppress it. Against the united front of all the 'powerful' even the might of the autocratic Byzantine Empire was of no avail. The great landowners and the officials formed, so to speak, a caste. The more important officials and officers naturally sought to obtain an estate in the provinces; as we have seen, they could scarcely invest their money in any other way; while the richer landowners strove, for their part, to rise into the official class and to secure for themselves, by taking over an official post or buying an official title, the social standing and connexions which they lacked. Usually the 'powerful' man was a great

¹ The Byzantine gold-piece (*νόμισμα*) contained 4.48 grammes of gold, thus representing metal to the value of about 15 gold francs; 72 *nomismata* gave one pound of gold (about 1096 gold francs).

landowner and an official at one and the same time. These facts are significant enough to explain why the government measures, in spite of their severity, could have no success. It was in the interests of those responsible for the execution of these measures to let them drop. It was the most powerful economic, the most eminent social, elements in the Empire whose will was diametrically opposed to that of the central administration. But most important of all, perhaps, was the fact that often the will of the peasant ran counter to the intention of the government. The excessive burden of taxation produced a new wave of the *patrocinium* movement. The poorer peasants renounced their burdensome freedom and placed themselves under the patronage of a powerful master, thus gaining relief from the pressure of duties and services. This explains how it was that the peasants not only sold their holdings to the 'powerful' but often gave them away, which simply meant that they voluntarily became the serfs of the landlord in order to escape from misery and insecurity and to find protection against the excessive state taxation, and, above all, the extortions of the tax-collectors. So the government which was attempting to protect the small freehold landowners usually had to contend, not only with the opposition of the great landowner, but also with that of the peasant himself.

The aristocracy was always strengthening both its economic and its political position. In the person of Nicephorus Phocas (963-9), a representative of one of the largest and richest families of magnates in Asia Minor, ascended the throne. The Byzantine government had hitherto opposed the great landowners' tendency to expand. Now the 'powerful' had their revenge. It was sufficient for Nicephorus Phocas to put an end to the preferential treatment given to the small landowner; his law of 967 deprived the peasants of the prior purchase rights in cases of the sale of property by the 'powerful', and in the name of justice it restored equality of treatment between the 'powerful' and the 'poor'. Conditions were such that this formal equality meant in practice the handing over of the small peasant proprietary to the 'powerful'. On the other hand, as a great military emperor, Nicephorus sought to strengthen and increase the property of the soldiers, but this in fact was to lose the character of peasant property. In future the value of the inalienable minimum of a military holding was to be not four, but twelve pounds of gold, and the emperor justified this by pointing to the new and more effective military equipment. This change must certainly have meant that the Byzantine army would henceforth be composed of a different social class. The heavily armed soldiers of Nicephorus, for whom he attempted to guarantee a holding worth twelve pounds of gold, could no longer be the old peasant militia. They could in all likelihood only be recruited from the rising class of the lesser nobility.

But while Nicephorus tried to foster the increasing strength of both greater and lesser secular nobility, he opposed the growth of ecclesiastical possessions. Since Gibbon's day it has been generally assumed to be an axiom that the increase of church and monastic lands was detrimental to the interests of the Byzantine Empire. But this is by no means obvious. As long as there was a surplus of unused land capable of cultivation, the growth of ecclesiastical property was an asset rather than otherwise, particularly as church and monastic estates in Byzantium were in principle liable to taxation. But as soon as any scarcity of land became noticeable, the further growth of ecclesiastical property at the expense of more productive forms of ownership, especially of peasant ownership, must have caused the state great anxiety. For the public utility of the ecclesiastical lands was naturally less than that of other landowners; and besides the principle of the liability of churches and monasteries to pay taxes was often broken, and their property frequently exempted from the burden of taxes, through the granting of privileges. The law of Nicephorus Phocas forbade all transfer of land to churches and monasteries and also prohibited new foundations, pointing out that earthly riches were prejudicial to the true monastic life, and that there were numerous old foundations in a state of economic decay which men should assist with grants of money instead of making unproductive transfers of land and founding new houses. This bold law of Nicephorus Phocas was repealed by his immediate successor, John Tzimiscēs (969–76), who, however, being himself a member of a great family, seems otherwise to have continued Nicephorus Phocas's agrarian policy.

The last to fight against the rise of the great landowners was Basil II (976–1025), the greatest of the Macedonian house. He acted with unparalleled energy and proved to be the strongest and bitterest enemy of the landowning aristocracy. He had already broken the political ambitions of the Byzantine magnates in a terrible civil war, and now he set out to curb their economic ambitions. He resumed the anti-aristocratic policy inaugurated by Romanus I Lecapenus, and not only continued it with unwavering consistency, but made it considerably more severe. By his law of 996 Basil II repealed the legislation legalizing the purchase of land by the 'powerful' after a definite period of delay. His radical policy was such that he did not fear to confiscate, even when there was no legal justification for this. But the most potent measure which he took in his struggle against the great landowners was the decree that the 'powerful' should pay the *allelengyon* for the poor, i.e. should be responsible for the peasants' tax arrears. Thus the burden of the *allelengyon* system which had, up to then, been borne by the neighbours of the insolvent taxpayer—according to the principle of the general liability of the whole village community for the payment of taxation—was trans-

ferred to the great landowners alone, without their being granted the right of usufruct on the property concerned. This measure had a two-fold effect: it gave the treasury greater certainty of securing the *allelengyon* money the payment of which, as we have seen, was often beyond the resources of the peasants; and it dealt the 'powerful' another heavy blow.

The opposition was crushed, but the moment that Basil II died it rose again. The death of Basil II was the turning-point in both the political and the economic development of the Byzantine Empire. His ineffective successors were not in a position to continue the struggle. Only a few years after his death the 'powerful' succeeded in getting the *allelengyon* payment abolished, and with it went, for ever, the whole system of additional taxes, which had been a fundamental element of the Byzantine method of taxation. The peasant could no longer pay the additional taxation, the 'powerful' would not. And the immediate interest of the treasury in the retention of this system grew less because, as the central administration became weaker from the eleventh century onwards, the system of farming out the taxes arose. This meant that, in the provinces where that method was employed, the tax-farmer took over the general responsibility for the payment of the taxes. It is true that the laws protecting the small landowner were not officially repealed, but after the death of Basil II the long series of these laws came to an end, which amounted to the same thing. For, as even the government regulations of the tenth century, in spite of their extreme severity, had been unable entirely to suppress the buying-up of peasant and military lands, now the passively benevolent attitude of the government meant that the great landowners' capacity for expansion could develop to the full. The destruction of the small freehold properties continued unrestricted; the great landowners absorbed the land of the peasants and soldiers and made the owners their serfs.

The 'powerful' had won. The central authority was forced to capitulate to them in the end. It had to give rein to a development which it could no longer check, and to leave the field open for the vigorously advancing class which had achieved both economic and social predominance. Thus the economic and social foundations on which Byzantium had previously rested had collapsed. The state relaxed its strict centralization and the feudalization of the Byzantine Empire began, the small freehold landowner being sacrificed in the process. Certainly there were free peasants in the late Byzantine period; but, whereas in the middle Byzantine period, from the seventh to the beginning of the eleventh century, the free and freely moving peasantry is the chief factor in agrarian development and the backbone of Byzantine agriculture, from the eleventh century onward, just as in the early

period, the great landlord dominates the scene. The agrarian history of the late Byzantine period is that of great landowners and their dependants.

IV. *The great landowners and their dependants in the late Byzantine period*

The decay of the peasant and military holdings implied a considerable fall in the state revenues and a fatal decrease in military resources. From the military point of view the Byzantine state was so impoverished and so weak that, from the second half of the eleventh century onwards, its very existence was imperilled. If the Comnenian dynasty succeeded in restoring Byzantine supremacy and creating a new army, it was only at the cost of extraordinary sacrifices on the part of the people. They were burdened more heavily than ever by the excessive taxation and the numerous public services required of them; and still the taxes were relentlessly increased. It was considered by no means unusual for the tax-farmers, when they undertook to levy taxes in a certain province, to make themselves responsible for collecting twice the nominal amount; this was regarded as a normal matter and scarcely worth mentioning.¹ Besides the actual tax assessment, the tax-farmer had to secure an additional sum for himself, for this was, after all, the point of his bargain. The high-handed extortions of the tax-officials and the tax-farmers were the subject of continual complaint from the Byzantine taxpayers. The population felt the oppression of their misdeeds even more than the actual burden of the taxes and the raising of the sums required.

Besides the land and head taxes, which went to make up the actual state tax (*δημόσιον*, *δημόσιος κανών*, and also simply *τέλος*), the rural population had to pay a whole series of regular and extraordinary dues, and to furnish various perquisites to the tax-collector. In addition there were the payments in kind and the labour services, the number and range of which were particularly oppressive in the late Byzantine period. Since the financial strength of the state had decreased at a time when its military needs were more varied than ever, and since the far-reaching decline of the native military resources compelled the government to recruit large numbers of foreign mercenaries, the population was for the most part engaged in providing for the defence of the country and in supplying the needs of the army. It had to find material and labour for the construction of ships, forts, bridges, and highroads. Above all, it had the crushing duty of giving the imperial officials and

¹ Cf. Zepos, *Jus*, I, 334.

the army food and lodging (*μύτατον, ἀπληκτον*), of doing transport work (*ἀγγαθεία*), and of supplying troops passing through with every kind of provision either free or at a very low price.

In principle the whole population of the Empire was liable for these duties; but whereas the small landowner was completely at the mercy of the high-handed officials and military officers, the great landlord was able to protect himself from them to a far greater extent, and even to obtain an imperial order forbidding officials and officers from setting foot on his land. Such privileges had originally been granted by imperial chrysobull to churches and monasteries as a sign of the emperor's special favour. From the eleventh century onwards such grants increased in number and were frequently made to secular landowners as well. The imperial chrysobull granted exemptions (*ἐξκουσεία*) from part, or the whole, of the taxes and public burdens. Often only a partial remission was granted at first and a number of payments would be expressly excluded from the exemption, above all the land tax, the pasture tax, and the obligation of constructing fortifications, which in the last centuries of the Byzantine Empire had generally been replaced by a cash payment. The landowner could, however, make a further request and obtain a new chrysobull granting him full economic and financial immunity. The Byzantine state observed great caution in granting legal immunity, yet the exercise of lesser jurisdiction by the landowners, of which there are isolated instances as early as the eleventh century, seems to have been by no means unusual after the fourteenth century. Legally the great landowners were not favoured and they were subject to regular taxation; but through the granting of privileges more and more exceptions were made, mostly in favour of them and of the more influential monasteries.

There were three kinds of great landed property in Byzantium: the crown land, the estates of the nobles, and ecclesiastical and monastic land. The crown land (*θεῖοι or εὐαγεῖς οἰκοί*, also *ἐπισκέψεις*) consisted of the private property of the imperial family and the actual state domain. In principle, and technically for administrative purposes, the state land was distinct from the imperial private property, but in actual fact the emperor had control over the state land, just as he had unrestricted control over all the state resources. The state land seems to have been scattered throughout the Empire, now in large massed estates, now in small parcels having their origin in the taking over of exempt property. It certainly had no fixed extent. Out of the great reserve of state and imperial domain, lands were continually being given and lent to persons who had rendered services to the state or had been able to win the emperor's favour, and above all to churches and monasteries. On the other hand the state was continually receiving new

land, not so much from exempt land, which counted for little by reason of its small extent, but rather from the very frequent confiscation of estates, which was the punishment of those imperial officials who had been convicted of hostility towards the government or who had fallen into disfavour.

But if state property fluctuated in amount, ecclesiastical property was in a condition of continuous growth. For it was continuously fed by the endowments of the devout of every class, from the emperor down to the humblest peasant. The alienation of land once dedicated to an ecclesiastical institution was, on the other hand, forbidden by ecclesiastical and secular law, and therefore only possible in exceptional cases and under special circumstances. The most influential churches had very considerable possessions, especially St Sophia at Constantinople. Sometimes the estates of the individual prelates, metropolitans, archbishops, and other churchmen, grew to important size. Closely related to the church were the charitable institutions, extraordinarily numerous in Byzantium: orphanages, homes for the aged, free hostels for travellers, hospitals, and so on. They enjoyed the most munificent support of the devout Byzantine emperors, and were likewise richly endowed with landed property.

But the most important part of the church's property consisted of the monastic estates. By reason of the reverence with which monastic life was regarded in Byzantium, most of the gifts of land naturally went to the monasteries, and came from such sources as pious foundations for a particular purpose, grants of land from those entering a monastery, or bequests. It was, therefore, above all to gifts that the gigantic and ever-increasing estates of the monasteries scattered over the whole Empire owed their origin, and it was but rarely that their growth met with even temporary opposition from the government. On the contrary, the monasteries enjoyed the most generous imperial privileges and received rich gifts of land from the emperors. Many Byzantine monasteries, whose records we are studying today, give the impression of a flourishing economic life and reveal an unlimited capacity for territorial expansion. But the economic conditions of individual monasteries were very varied. Those which enjoyed no privileges were often far from prosperous; they had taxes to pay and all the public duties to fulfil; they also had to supply recruits and were exposed to the violence of the civil and military officials. Land that was subject to taxes and public duties could in certain circumstances become a burden. But the prohibition of the alienation of church land hindered any normal economic regulation and the attainment of a right proportion between the supply of land and the resources necessary for working it. The monasteries which prospered were those which controlled sufficient

capital and the necessary labour, and which had been able to obtain from the emperor immunity from the state taxation; and it is just these monasteries whose records have come down to us. But it would seem that side by side with these there existed many poor monasteries and derelict monastic estates. While the former, which were economically flourishing, strove to increase their property, the latter, whose activity had diminished and who lacked capital and labour, attempted to get rid of land that had become unremunerative. This is the key to the understanding of the institution of the *charisticarioi*, which provided an outlet for the monastic economic activities that had been checked by the principle of inalienability. It is true that the leasing of monastic land offered a certain compensation for the veto on alienation; but even leasing beyond a certain period was usually forbidden to churches and monasteries. Moreover, there was not merely a problem of monastic lands; there were also impoverished monasteries which were in need of economic assistance. Such monasteries, together with the lands belonging to them, were given over to the so-called *charisticarioi*, who were influential laymen with great capital resources, and whose function was to administer the monastic lands in question and to attempt to restore their economic health. This institution, which was known from the fifth century onwards, spread enormously after the late tenth century, and reached its climax in the eleventh century. Again and again it met with strong opposition from the Church; and so, as at the Council of Chalcedon as early as 451, it was sternly and repeatedly condemned by later synods. For instead of looking after the financial well-being of the monasteries, the lay administrators regarded them as financial concerns for their own profit; and they cared even less for the moral and religious obligations of monastic life than for the economic interests of the monasteries. But this system nevertheless continued to exist and was expressly defended by several influential prelates, the reason being that, in spite of its many disadvantages, it must have fulfilled a vital need of monastic economy. From the period of the Comneni onwards the system of the *charisticarioi* began a new phase in its development. The emperors took into their own hands the granting of the *charisticaria*, in order to confer monastic estates—and certainly not the worst—as benefices. Henceforth the system served the interests of the state, not those of the monasteries and churches, while the abuses connected with it only increased in number. This stage marks the degeneration of the institution and apparently the beginning of its collapse.

In every period it was the property of the great lay landowners that expanded most conspicuously. It was their hunger for land which devoured the property of peasants and soldiers; it was they who, as *charisticarioi*, seized for themselves inalienable church land. The nature

and extent of the secular nobles' property were very varied. Both the greatest magnates and highest dignitaries, as well as the lesser officials and officers, belonged to the class of the 'powerful'. However sharply the distinction between 'powerful' and 'poor' stands out, yet the boundaries were never rigidly fixed: status was determined, not by origin, but by the way of life, and so ultimately by the financial circumstances of the individual at any given moment. Peasants who had become rich and managed to amass considerable property and no longer needed to earn their living with their own hands—these were counted among the 'powerful' without further question.

But, besides the landowners who had recently risen from the ranks and the holders of the less important official posts owning relatively modest estates, there were the possessors of the great *latifundia*, owning enormous groups of estates with hosts of serfs and herds of thousands of cattle. Often they had their seats in the capital, where they occupied important posts and drew the revenues of their property. For them the acquisition of land was a safe way of investing their wealth. From the eleventh century onwards, the landowning nobility, having carried the day and defeated the imperial power on both economic and political issues, thus making the state the defender of its interests, was generally able, like the churches and monasteries, to secure far-reaching privileges by means of imperial chrysobulls. But the most striking phenomenon in the life of the late Byzantine provinces, and the most characteristic accompaniment of Byzantine feudalization, was the *pronoia* system which appeared after the middle of the eleventh century. As a reward for services rendered or as a basis for the discharge of definite official obligations, the Byzantine magnates received lands to administer (*εἰς πρόνοίαν*), and with the land were handed over the peasants living on it who became the *paroikoi* of the *pronoetes*. A grant of *pronoia* differed from an imperial gift of land in that it was given—at least to begin with—for a definite period, generally for the lifetime of the recipient, and could therefore neither be alienated nor inherited. In return the *pronoetes* received far-reaching privileges and rights of immunity. From the time of the Comneni the *pronoia* system was given a military character, in order to provide a certain compensation for the widespread disappearance of military holdings. The *pronoetes* had to perform military service and to supply a certain number of soldiers according to the resources of the property granted him. The term *stratiotes* is now frequently applied, not to the old peasant soldier, who, it is true, is still occasionally met with, but who now plays a quite subordinate part, but rather to the *pronoetes*, whose levies, together with the foreign mercenaries, form the basis of the Byzantine military strength in the late period. The process of evolution had now produced a situation in

which the great landowner became the chief support of the Byzantine Empire and, through the *pronoia* system, the chief source of its military power. Thus the *pronoia* system became more and more important and widespread, and even found its way beyond the Byzantine frontiers into Serbia and the territory of the Venetian republic. Lands of varying size, sometimes smaller estates, sometimes larger ones, as also fishing rights, salt works, and so on, were granted out to *pronoia*. In the area allotted to him the *pronoetes* himself raised the taxes, part of which he paid to the treasury, part of which he kept for himself. Hence the more important *pronoetai* must have had their own administrative machinery. The *pronoia* lands were more or less autonomous and were as a rule outside the central administrative system, a fact which tremendously accelerated the process of feudalization. When in A.D. 1204 the Western powers set up the Latin Empire in Constantinople, and the Western barons created a number of principalities for themselves in Greek territory, they found that they were completely familiar with existing conditions, which they could take over without much alteration. They used the significant terms *fief* and *feudum* as adequate equivalents of the Byzantine *pronoia*. The Frankish rule in Greek lands furthered the process of feudalization, and produced conditions typical of a highly developed Western feudalism, with a complicated hierarchical system of relations between vassal and lord such as Byzantium had never known. But even on purely Byzantine soil in Asia Minor, as far back as the middle of the thirteenth century, there is an instance of a *pronoetes* who calls himself 'imperial vassal and knight' (ἰεξιὸς καὶ καβαλλάριος).¹

The last stage was the conversion of the conditional and temporary possession of the *pronoia* estates into hereditary and unrestricted ownership. The distinction between *pronoia* estates and the hereditary estates vanished so completely that the very term *pronoia* gradually lost its real meaning and was applied to the most varied kinds of property. In the same way in Muscovite Russia the distinction between '*pomestya*' and '*votcheny*', i.e. estates held temporarily on condition of discharging military service and hereditary estates, disappeared, even though the development in the two cases differed here and there in detail, and at many points was quite different. The assimilation of the *pronoia* estates to other Byzantine property was made easier by the fact that, on the one hand, in the late Byzantine period great landed property of all kinds, except in so far as it was protected by privileges, was liable for the supply of recruits, and that, on the other hand, with the growing power of the *pronoetai* and their ever-increasing assertion of their independence of the central administration, the actual military services of the *pronoia*

¹ Miklosich-Müller, iv, 81 (of the year 1251) and *passim*.

estates diminished faster and faster as time went on, until at last they were scarcely different from the modest liabilities of the hereditary estates. The tottering power of the state could no longer oppose the efforts of the Byzantine magnates, and from the fourteenth century onwards estates originally granted *κατὰ λόγον προνοίας* were more and more frequently, as a result of pressure from the *pronoetai*, handed over *κατὰ λόγον γονικότητος*, or *κατὰ λόγον δεσποτείας*,¹ i.e. they became the hereditary property of the *pronoetai* and were lost to the state. The circle was complete: the hereditary landowners had obtained far-reaching privileges such as applied originally only to the conditionally granted fiefs of the *pronoetai*, while the *pronoia* estates enjoyed all the advantages of private and hereditary property.

However varied and diverse the different kinds of Byzantine estates were, the principles on which they were worked were on the whole the same. On state and imperial domains, on ecclesiastical and monastic estates, on the hereditary and the conditionally granted property of the nobles, there were always the two means of economic development—tenancy and serf labour. On the other hand, as the ancient world falls more and more into the background, slaves become less important, and in the last centuries of Byzantium disappear completely. The most usual form of lease was the *emphyteusis*, well known as far back as the late Roman period, that is, the hereditary lease with liability for the improvement of the land leased. With the so-called perpetual *emphyteusis* (*διηλεκτής ἐμφύτευσις*) the contract was valid for three generations; the short-term *emphyteusis* (*ἐμπερίγραφος ἐμφύτευσις*) was usually for 25 or 29 years, this being accounted for by the fact that residence on the landlord's ground for 30 years made the tenant his lord's *colonus*. Such considerations must have had less and less weight as time went on, and although the lease for a stated period is found existing side by side with the 'perpetual' lease, it was chiefly used on ecclesiastical and monastic estates; for church land was in principle inalienable, and could only be leased for an indefinite period on the estates of certain churches. But it seems that with every kind of tenancy it was possible to renew the lease, in which case the tenant usually had to pay a fine, or entrance fee, equal to twice the annual rent. In matters of detail conditions of tenancy were very varied and were settled according to the relations existing between the contracting parties. If it was a question of clearing untilled land for the cultivation of valuable crops, then it was agreed that the payment of rent should not begin until several years after the contract.² In the eleventh century the normal rate of annual rent for a lease seems to have been 1 *nomisma* for 10 *modioi* of arable land (1 *modios*

¹ Cf. Sathas, *Μεσαιωνική Βιβλιοθήκη*, I, 39 ff.

² Miklosich-Müller, III, 237 f.

is about $\frac{1}{12}$ hectare).¹ In the fourteenth century the rent for a lease was somewhat lower, for then, in an age when the Byzantine gold coin was about two-fifths of its original value, one paid 1 *nomisma* (*hyrepyron*) for 25 *modioi* of good land or for 50 *modioi* of inferior land.² The rent of vineyards was about ten times as high as that of arable land of average quality.³ Seeing that with the ever-widening extension of money economy the actual price level did, on the whole, rise very appreciably in the last centuries of the Byzantine Empire, these data imply a relative fall in rents. The explanation of this can undoubtedly be found in the devastation of the large estates in consequence of foreign invasions and the generally chaotic conditions in the decline of the later Empire. In the division of the produce in kind between the owner of the land and the tenant, the former seems to have claimed no longer the tenth, but only the half of the tenth.⁴ All points to the fact that the economic decline in the age of the Palaeologi brought misfortune to the land-owners, in spite of the powerful position which they had secured for themselves.

The lands of the dependent *paroikoi* were the most economically productive part of the landed estates. One could scarcely say that there was any fundamental difference between the *paroikoi* of the state (*δημοσιακοὶ πάροικοι*) and the *paroikoi* of private landlords. The state *paroikoi* could always be transferred to the *pronoia* of either a secular or an ecclesiastical lord. A transference of this kind could mean either the deterioration or amelioration of the condition of the *paroikoi* according to the general situation of the landlord, whose land might or might not have to bear many public services. For the rest the position of the *paroikoi* of one and the same landlord could be very different in individual cases, as we shall see. From the legal point of view the *paroikoi* were completely distinct from the free peasants, in so far as they had only a *dominium utile* over their land, while the land of the free peasants was under their *dominium directum*. But there was no economic or social gulf between them; economically the comparison did not usually tell in favour of the free peasant. It often happened that members of the same family were under a neighbouring landowner, some as free peasants and some as *paroikoi*. Priests and other clerics often had the status of *paroikoi*, and they could, indeed, be the *paroikoi* of *pronoetai*.⁵ The land of the *paroikoi* was their heritable possession. The landlord could not evict them, and indeed he had a vital interest in keeping his *paroikoi*. The relation of the *paroikoi* to the lord was so defined that they paid him a

¹ *Id.* iv, 15 (of the year 1073).

² *Vizant. Vremennik*, xvii, Prilozh, Nr. 92 (of the year 1323).

³ Uspensky, *Materialy*, xxx, 1 ff., 21 (*Practicon* of the monastery of Chilandariou).

⁴ *Vizant. Vremennik*, xvii, Prilozh, Nr. 30.

⁵ Miklosich-Müller, iv, 71, 81.

rent and as a rule had to perform prescribed services on the lord's demesne. But they kept their personal freedom. One might say that the *paroikoi* were bound to the soil of 'the manor', not personally, but financially and economically. They could not leave their lord in so far as they had economic and financial obligations towards him; if they did, the lord could demand, and in some circumstances compel, their return. It was not unusual to find the *paroikoi* leasing land from another lord with the permission of their own lord. There are instances of their settling in the nearest town—presumably as craftsmen—and if they made their due payments their lord had no cause for complaint.¹ This makes it clear that there were *paroikoi* who owed the landlord rent alone and had to perform no direct services. Indeed the owners of large lordships did not need to demand labour services from all their *paroikoi*. So far as possible, the services were valued in money and commuted, in the same way that the state often took money payments in lieu of obligatory labour services. But the *paroikoi* were normally employed on the estate in definite manual and team works. Then there were also agricultural labourers who had no property of their own, but who lived on the estate as farm hands. They took the place of the slave labour by means of which Byzantine estates in the early Middle Ages were still largely worked. It is significant that they were called *δουλοπάροικοι* or *πάροικοι δουλευταί*, which shows clearly how like they were to slaves.

The *paroikoi* who had their own land mostly lived in villages as the free peasants did; the arable land was grouped round the peasant homesteads which, with the orchards and vegetable gardens, formed the centre of the village. Usually the peasant families were very large; married sons often remained on their father's farm, so that family communities grew up, although these never reached the size of a Serbian *zadruga*. The main concern of the Byzantine peasantry, the free as well as the servile, was always the arable land and the vineyard, and, after these, cattle breeding; in certain districts the cultivation of the olive was also very important. As in the late Roman period, so in medieval Byzantium and also in the contemporary Muscovite kingdom, it was possible to distinguish between three grades of land according to their value. In the thirteenth century one paid almost 1 *nomisma* (which was then worth three-quarters of its nominal value) for 1 *modios* of good, 2–3 *modioi* of medium, and 5–10 *modioi* of inferior land; for vineyards one paid then on an average about 6 *nomismata* for 1 *modios*; an olive tree with the land belonging to it cost about 1 *nomisma*, without the land about $\frac{1}{3}$ *nomisma*. Usually the property of the *paroikoi*, like that of the free peasants, was divided into several small strips of land. There is an instance of a *paroikos* who had 75 *modioi* of land altogether (i.e. about

¹ Cf. Miklosich-Müller, iv, 2 f.

6 hectares) and possessed not less than thirteen separate parcels: one also finds minute parcels which were only 1 *modios* in size.¹ One of the monasteries on Athos was given by the emperor 748 *modioi* of the best land on the island of Lemnos, and this was divided into 22 separate plots of land of which some were only 3 *modioi* in size.² There were no doubt larger properties, but as a rule the lands owned by the state and the lands of the monasteries, mostly acquired by bequest, were widely scattered in fragments. Hence the great variety of conditions of possession; all kinds of landownership lay intermingled and intersected. There is a case of a single village that belonged partly to a monastery, partly to a private landowner, and partly to the state.³

It would be wrong to conclude from this that there was any real land shortage, for Byzantium never lacked idle land. The greater part of an average estate remained, as a rule, uncultivated, used at best as grazing ground, a great deal was leased out, for the holdings of the *paroikoi* certainly formed the most productive, but also the smallest, part of the landed estates. The difficulty in making proper use of the larger estates was partly due to the primitive conditions of economic technique; for in this respect the Byzantine Empire, so far ahead in culture, was in many ways far behind the West. Thus Byzantium to the end of its days continued to employ an extremely uneconomic and antiquated harness for draught animals, while by the tenth century the West had evolved a greatly improved method of harnessing, which from the thirteenth century onwards was also found in Serbia. True, as we have already said, in medieval Byzantium the superfluity of uncultivated land was not so great, the need of workmen not so pressing, as in the early Byzantine period; and in times of economic activity the classes which were then strongest showed a marked desire for land. But it must be remembered that this desire was only for the best kinds of land. It is an open question whether, for the big landowner who seized the property of the peasants, it was not in the first instance really a matter of acquiring labour by reducing the free peasant to the position of a serf rather than of acquiring land. Monastic documents often give the impression that the monasteries, as recipients of imperial bounty, laid the greatest stress, not on the gift of the actual land, but on that of the *paroikoi* allotted to them.

Paroikoi were distinguished according to their possessions and their economic potentiality. In estimating this, the conception of the *ζευγάριον* was used, which meant primarily a yoke of oxen; but in a derivative sense, like the Roman *iugum*, it meant an economic and fiscal unit, in which the peasants' wealth and tax-paying capacity was measured.

¹ *Vizant. Vremennik*, xvii, Prilozh. Nr. 40.

² *Akty Russago na svyatom Afone monastyrya*, Nr. 25 (of the year 1407).

³ Miklosich-Müller, v, 192 (of the year 1350).

A property was said to consist of so many ζευγάρια, and peasants are described, according to the value of their possessions, as ζευγαράτοι, or βοιδάτοι, or also as ἀκτῆμονες. The *zeugaratoi* were those *paroikoi* who had a yoke of oxen and a plot of land of a given size and quality, that is, land that could be managed with the help of a yoke of oxen. The actual area varied with the quality of the land and with local conditions from less than 100 to even more than 200 *modioi* of arable. This was the normal size of an adequate peasant holding. Besides the *zeugaratoi* there are occasionally found *duozeugaratoi*, who had a double share of land and two pairs of oxen. Those *paroikoi* who were known as *boidatoi*, on the other hand, had only a single ox and half the normal unit of land. Lastly, there were the *aktemones* who had no land, and no draught animals, except perhaps a donkey. The payment owed varied with the holding. On one estate in the seventies of the eleventh century the *zeugaratoi* paid a ground tax (συνωνή) and a hearth tax (καπνικόν) of 1 *nomisma*, the *boidatoi* paid $\frac{1}{2}$ *nomisma*, while the *aktemones*, being landless, contributed no ground tax, but only had to pay the hearth tax ($\frac{1}{2}$ *nomisma* if they had a donkey, $\frac{1}{4}$ *nomisma* if they had no draught animal). Domestic animals were subject to a special tax, the grazing tax (ἐννόμιον); for the bigger cattle 1 *milesarion* (a silver coin worth $\frac{1}{12}$ of a *nomisma*) per head, for sheep 1 *nomisma* per 100 beasts.¹ The landless folk were mainly occupied about the flocks and herds. Nevertheless, the boundaries between the various categories were not rigid. The landless folk might be provided with land and the corresponding equipment and promoted to the class of the *zeugaratoi*.² Since there was no lack of land, landlessness was usually only a transitional stage.

The status of προσκαθήμενοι, which often appears in the sources, was also an intermediate one. Usually peasants who had settled on the land of an estate only a short time back were so described. After a definite time they became *paroikoi* and could be inscribed as such at the next official inspection, whether as *zeugaratoi* or as *boidatoi*, according to the possessions which they had meanwhile acquired.³ In the late Byzantine period there is plenty of binding to the soil; but among a large part of the population there is also plenty of wandering. The later the period and the more uncertain the conditions in the declining Empire, the more often we find this floating class of 'foreigners', the 'free' (from the point of view of taxation), the 'unknown to the treasury' (ξένοι, ἐλεύθεροι, τῷ δημοσίῳ ἀνεπίγνωστοι). Some of these were probably inhabitants of the districts devastated by hostile invasions, some people who had once been free peasants, or *paroikoi* who had fled from im-

¹ Miklosich-Müller, VI, 15 (of the year 1073).

² *Izvestiya Russ. Archeol. Inst. v. Constantinople*, VI, 36.

³ Cf. Miklosich-Müller, IV, 182.

impoverished estates. Sooner or later they settled down on the property of bigger and richer landowners to become their *paroikoi*. This colonization was doubtless to the interest of the landowners, who thus gained new workers. So we see how big landowners—so far as our sources tell us they are nearly all rich monasteries—protect themselves by securing beforehand a chrysobull giving the imperial assent to the settlement of such people. But the landlords concerned do not merely wait for the appearance of new settlers: they know how to entice them by various devices. Here we meet a phenomenon that is of great general significance in economic development: the smaller and poorer estates lost their workers, who flocked to the bigger, the richer, and—what is perhaps most important of all—the privileged, estates.

Impossible as it is to make any generalization as to whether the condition of *paroikoi* was better on imperial or private property, on the estates of the Church, or on those of the secular nobles, it is, however, a clear and unmistakable fact that the *paroikoi* on the bigger and more privileged estates were in a considerably more favourable position than those on the smaller and unprivileged. The less land an owner possessed, the greater the demesne from which he lived in proportion to the whole estate and so the smaller the number of his *paroikoi*, the more must he burden each *paroikos* with demesne services. On the other hand the *paroikoi* on the bigger estates which had more workers could give their chief attention to the cultivation of their own plots, since their work would be less necessary on their lord's land. The difference between the privileged and unprivileged estates affected the position of the *paroikoi* even more strongly. If, by reason of an imperial privilege, an estate enjoyed exemption from taxes and from public services, this was a great advantage, not only for the owners, but also for the *paroikoi*. No doubt, the claims of the state were transferred to the owner, but part of the burden fell away, above all the particularly onerous duty of entertaining officials and quartering soldiers. To this extent the position of the *paroikoi* whose lords possessed immunities was doubtless more favourable than that of the free peasants—a circumstance that explains much in Byzantine development. The *paroikoi* who had to meet the full force of the demands of both private landowners and the state were in a very different position. It is clear that they were tempted to migrate to the privileged estates; and in any case they were so terribly overburdened that their powers of production were affected, which inevitably reacted on the economic prosperity of their lords.

This explains why the small estates everywhere fell into ruins, and also why the unprivileged big estates grew increasingly poorer, while only the very large estates which were endowed with rights of immunity flourished. These separated themselves from the enfeebled state,

entered into competition with it as autonomous powers, and cut into its economic and political foundations. The course taken by Byzantine agrarian history provides at every stage the key to the understanding of the whole historical evolution of Byzantium. Just as the power and the internal stability of the Byzantine Empire in its best days were based on sound agrarian conditions, so its downfall was in great measure determined by the less happy course of its subsequent agrarian history.

Bibliographies

EDITOR'S NOTE (First Edition)

At an early stage the editors abandoned the notion of compiling a general bibliography. If made complete, this would be little less than a bibliography of medieval history, which would be superfluous. Further, contributors had drawn up their bibliographies on divergent lines; had often inserted valuable notes explaining the methods adopted; and sometimes had thrown the bibliography almost into narrative form. It was therefore decided to leave each bibliography as it stood, with merely editorial correction. The great difficulties of communication since August 1939, which have robbed us of one bibliography entirely, confirmed us in this policy. One result of it is that certain books recur in several lists. We have left them in all, because they both register the contributor's debt and, in a rough way, the greatness, or at least the utility, of the recurring books.

EDITOR'S NOTE (Second Edition)

All the bibliographies in the second edition have been revised and brought up to date, some by the authors of the new and revised chapters, others by historians specially commissioned to do so. Needless to say the principles on which the new or revised bibliographies have been compiled remain the same as in the first edition, with the result that the new bibliographies differ from each other as much as the old ones in the principle of selection and in the manner of presentation. The arguments in favour of this policy have been set out in Professor Clapham's note to the bibliographies in the first edition.

Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used for the journals most often quoted:

- AHES. *Annales d'histoire économique et sociale.*
- AHR. *American Historical Review.*
- ASI. *Archivio Storico Italiano.*
- AVS. *Archivio Vittorio Scialoja.*
- EHR. *English Historical Review*
- EcHR. *Economic History Review*
- EJ. *Economic Journal*; EJ. (Ec. Hist.), Historical supplement to EJ.
- EC. *Economia e Storia.*
- ESAR. *An Economic Survey of Ancient Rome* (ed. Terrey Frank)
- HJ. *Historisches Jahrbuch.*
- HZ. *Historische Zeitschrift.*
- JRS. *Journal of Roman Studies.*
- MLA. *Materialy i issledovaniya po arkheologii SSSR.*
- (N)AV. *(Nuovo) Archivio Veneto.*
- RB. *Revue Belge de Philologie et d'Histoire.*
- RH. *Revue historique*
- TRHS. *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society.*
- VSWG. *Vierteljahrschrift für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte.*
- ZAA. *Zeitschrift für Agrargeschichte und Agrarsoziologie.*
- ZSS. *Zeitschrift der Savigny-Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte.*

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CHAPTER V

Agrarian Conditions in the Byzantine Empire in the Middle Ages

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OBSERVATIONS
ON THE ARISTOCRACY
IN BYZANTIUM

GEORGE OSTROGORSKY

This study is based on a paper delivered at the Symposium on "Byzantine Society," held at Dumbarton Oaks in May 1969.

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AT the Symposium of 1957, which was devoted to the Byzantine world in the seventh century, we spoke about the radical changes which, during that period, affected every facet of life in the Eastern Empire. It was then that the Late Roman state faded away, and mediaeval Byzantium, an entity profoundly different from the Empire of Justinian's days, came into being. With the introduction of the theme system there arose a new form of provincial administration and a new military organization, the ethnic composition of the provincial population was substantially altered, the cultural life of the Empire in all its manifestations acquired new traits. But the most decisive change of all was the one affecting the social structure. It is indeed the upheavals in the social and economic spheres that force us to view this period as marking a break in the development of the Eastern Roman Empire, and, at the same time, enable us to take it as the starting point for the remarks which I should like to present to you today.

In the late Roman Empire, as is well known, big landholding was constantly on the increase, while the peasant population was losing its independence. Large estates with their dependent *coloni* were dominant in the provinces of the Empire. In the early Middle Ages the picture changes completely. The internal crisis, which for a long time had been eroding the organism of the Roman Empire and which became particularly acute in the late sixth and early seventh centuries, undermined the position of the old aristocracy, while its economic basis was destroyed by the hostile invasions into the eastern provinces and the Balkans. As a result, small landholding now came to the fore. Petty landholders, peasants living in communes, and the soldiers of the new thematic army became the bulwark of mediaeval Byzantium. The ethnic composition of this emerging class of independent peasants and *stratiotai* must have been very mixed. Masses of foreign newcomers settled on deserted territories. The Byzantine government consciously encouraged this colonization: by assigning lands to the newcomers, especially to the Slavs who had invaded the Balkans, it was giving new strength to ravaged areas. Byzantium was undergoing a process of "barbarization," i.e., a process of internal renewal and rejuvenation that lasted from the seventh to the ninth century.

It is against this background that one ought to examine the social development of Byzantium during the early Middle Ages. The old landholding gentry disappeared from view as a leading class. The social structure of the Empire acquired for a time a relative homogeneity, but this was, of course, a transitory phenomenon. Inevitably, land ownership passed into fewer hands, which led to a growing social differentiation, i.e., to the formation of a new aristocratic class. This aristocracy was naturally recruited from the upper ranks of the theme-organization which had become the foundation of the mediaeval Byzantine State.

In the narrative sources referring to the events of the eighth and ninth centuries we occasionally encounter evidence for the concentration of consider-

able landed ownership and great wealth. Thus, the well-known story of Constantine Porphyrogenitus in the *Vita Basilii* tells us, not without obvious exaggeration, of the enormous estates and countless treasure of the Peloponnesian widow Danelis, the protectress of the future founder of the Macedonian dynasty.¹ Likewise, the Life of St. Philaretos the Almsgiver, composed in 821/22, but describing conditions in the second half of the eighth century, portrays—even if it overstates—the great wealth of its hero, a native of Paphlagonia.² As has often been remarked, family names begin to appear in Byzantium from the second half of the eighth century, this being a clear sign of the emergence of a hereditary aristocracy.³ We have to do here with the military leaders and higher dignitaries of the theme-organization, the founders of the famous aristocratic houses of Byzantium.⁴

The growth of the thematic gentry is clearly reflected in the legislation of the Emperor Leo VI (886–912). Yielding to the tendency of the aristocracy to increase its estates, one of Leo's Novels⁵ abrogates the older regulation forbidding officials to acquire property in the area placed under their authority without the emperor's permission.⁶ The same emperor recommends that the *strategoi* should be appointed from among rich and noble persons: as Leo's *Tactica* has it, "Let a good, noble and rich man be named *strategos*."⁷ True, the same *Tactica* contains a moralizing passage to the effect that nobility should be evaluated not according to one's ancestors, but according to one's deeds and achievements, and that the *strategoi* should be distinguished by their own rather than by ancestral virtues; it is even stated that *strategoi* who do not have glorious ancestors better fulfill their responsibilities, eager as they are to compensate by their own feats for their low birth.⁸ It seems that we encounter here two opposed views, and we may observe a certain hesitation between the old classless maxims and the new respect for the growing aristocratic class.⁹ Coming back to the qualities requisite in a military leader, the author of the *Tactica* solves the dilemma with the following compromise: There is no obstacle to having a commander who is rich and noble not only by birth, but also in spirit.¹⁰

If we now turn to the Strategicon of pseudo-Maurice, we see that the question concerning the family origin of a general is not even posed. According to this work of the early seventh century, a commander ought to be a good Christian and a just man (θεοφιλέας καὶ δικαιοσύνης . . . φροντίλειν), and no more.¹¹ This differ-

¹ Theophanes Continuatus, ed. Bonn, 227ff., 316ff.

² Ed. M. H. Fourmy and M. Leroy, *Byzantion*, 9 (1934), 112ff.

³ See the recent study by A. P. Každan, "Ob aristokratizacii vizantijskogo obščestva VIII–XII vv.," *Zbornik radova Vizant. Inst.*, 11 (1968), 47ff.

⁴ Cf., e.g., Theophanes, ed. de Boor, I, 440.26, where Michael Melissenos is mentioned, appointed by Constantine V *strategos* of the Anatolic theme.

⁵ *Nov. Leonis* 84: Zepos, *Jus graecoromanum*, I, 152f.

⁶ Cf. *Cod. Just.*, I, 53, 1.

⁷ *Tactica Leonis*, const. II, 21, ed. Vári, I, 29. Cf. M. Mitard, "Le pouvoir impérial au temps de Léon VI le Sage," *Mélanges Diehl*, I (1930), 215ff.; R. Guiland, "La noblesse de race à Byzance," *Byzantinoslavica*, 9 (1948), 307ff.

⁸ *Ibid.*, const. II, 19–20, ed. Vári, I, 27–29.

⁹ Cf. Každan, *loc. cit.*

¹⁰ *Tactica Leonis*, const. IV, 3, ed. Vári, I, 50.

¹¹ Ed. Scheffer, 3–4. Cf. Každan, *op. cit.*, 48.

ence is all the more remarkable in view of the fact that the Strategicon of pseudo-Maurice was a basic source of Leo's *Tactica* from which the latter made substantial and often literal borrowings. Of course, the *Tactica* contain certain additions and changes required by the conditions of the time, and this is precisely the case in the discussion of the qualities of a military leader: while repeating the commonplaces about the requisite moral virtues, the *Tactica* brought to the fore a problem that had not existed in the days of pseudo-Maurice, but had since gained actuality. The same commonplaces concerning the importance of good works, inspired by the spirit of traditional rhetoric, continued to be reiterated in later documents, while in reality the requirement of noble birth, which is stated clearly enough but not without some hesitation in the *Tactica* of Leo VI, became more and more dominant.

It is significant in this connection that in the accounts of the promotions of dignitaries contained in the *Book of Ceremonies* of Constantine Porphyrogenitus, the demes, in saluting the newly appointed person, make a point of emphasizing his noble birth. We have, for example, a detailed description of the ceremonial acclamations of the demes and their cantors after the appointment of patricians. Pointing first to the gracious emperors as to the originators of the promotion that had been made, the cantors exclaim, "Welcome thou, appointed by our benefactors (καλῶς ἤλθες, προβολή εὐεργετῶν) !" "Welcome thou, beloved by the sovereigns (καλῶς ἤλθες, ποθητὲ τῶν ἀνάκτων) !" Then: "Welcome thou, who art of noble ancestors (καλῶς ἤλθες, ὁ εὐγενὴς ἐκ προγόνων) !" And finally: "Welcome so-and-so, patrician of the Romans (καλῶς ἤλθες ὁ δεῖνα, πατρικίᾳ τῶν Ῥωμαίων) !" Every time the demes repeated "Welcome!"¹² Thus, the glorification of the noble ancestry of the person appointed became a regular part of the ritual followed at the promotion of dignitaries, including that of thematic *strategoi* who often bore the title of patrician.

The *Book of Ceremonies* also contains the complete text of the acclamations prescribed for the promotion of the Prefect of Constantinople. In view of the particular importance of the governor of the capital, these acclamations are more prolonged and ceremonial, but their structure is the same. Here, too, the cantors of the demes celebrate the noble origin of the appointee with the same greeting: καλῶς ἤλθες, ὁ εὐγενὴς ἐκ προγόνων.¹³ Thus, by the first half of the tenth century the Prefect of Constantinople, who is styled the "Father of the City" (πατὴρ πόλεως),^{13a} normally came from the aristocratic class. This information is worthy of note. It proves that the Byzantine gentry had succeeded in securing its position in the government apparatus, and that access to its highest posts, at one time open to everybody, had become a privilege of a hereditary aristocracy.

¹² *De Caerim.*, ed. Bonn, I, 253.5ff.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 267.2. The *Book of Ceremonies* has preserved the full text of the demes' acclamations for the promotions of only a few classes of dignitaries, but there can be no doubt that similar acclamations were also made at the promotions of other important officials of the court. A reference to the noble origin of *protospatharii* occurs in the midst of acclamations connected with the promotion of patricians (*ibid.*, 253.19).

^{13a} *Ibid.*, 264.12, 528.2.

The growing importance of the aristocracy is undoubtedly the most significant phenomenon in the internal history of Byzantium in the tenth century. This gave a new direction to the social development and caused an upheaval in existing conditions. The "powerful" (οἱ δυνατοί) quickly expanded their landholdings by absorbing the plots of petty owners. The peasants and *stratiotai* became dependent *paroikoi* on the estates of big landowners, while the government lost its soldiers and its most reliable taxpayers.

In this context there arose a prolonged and determined struggle between the central authority and the landed aristocracy, of which we are informed by the famous Novels of the Macedonian emperors. Through a series of legislative acts and administrative measures, the government was attempting to halt the absorption of the property of the "poor" (πένητες, πτωχοί), as the petty landowners are called in the imperial Novels, in contrast to the "powerful." I shall not dwell here on the course of this dramatic struggle, since it has been described many times. The only point I should like to make is that, in my opinion, the struggle was waged not between the big and petty landowners, as might appear from the reading of the deliberately rhetorical imperial Novels, but between, on the one hand, the attacking forces of the landed aristocracy, which was striving to dominate the peasants and *stratiotai* who were answerable to the government, and, on the other hand, the central authority which desired to maintain its hold over these people.¹⁴ No matter how powerful the government was at the time, its opposition was doomed to failure. All it could do was to slow down the rise of the landed aristocracy whose eventual victory it could not prevent.

Who, then, were these "powerful" who threatened the existence of that bulwark of the Byzantine state, namely the peasants and the soldiers? They are enumerated in the Novel of the Emperor Romanus I Lecapenus of the year 934 (?). They were the glorious magistri and patricians, persons invested with authorities (ἀρχαίς) and military commands (στρατηγείαις), with a civil or military rank, members of the senate, acting or former archons of the themes, and likewise metropolitans, archbishops, and bishops beloved of God, abbots, ecclesiastical archons, the supervisors of charitable and imperial houses.¹⁵ In a word, they were the powerful of this world who, by virtue of their position and influence, exerted pressure on the "poor." Even more eloquent, if more vague, is the definition contained in the Novel of the same Emperor of the year 922, according to which all those are accounted powerful who, either by themselves or through the agency of their friends or by the promise of some benefit, are able to inspire fear in the poor and force them to alienate their lands.¹⁶ These definitions have a clearly marked social aspect,¹⁷ even if it is difficult to distinguish here between the social and the economic sides of the question.

¹⁴ Cf. G. Ostrogorsky, *Quelques problèmes d'histoire de la paysannerie byzantine* (Brussels, 1956), 11 ff.

¹⁵ Zepos, *Jus*, I, 209; Dölger, *Regesten*, No. 628.

¹⁶ Zepos, *Jus*, I, 203; Dölger, *Regesten*, No. 595.

¹⁷ Cf. P. Lemerle, "Esquisse pour une histoire agraire de Byzance," *Revue hist.* (April-June 1958), 271.

Genetically, the Byzantine aristocracy arose from the upper ranks of the services, but its power was determined both by service position and by wealth—especially landed wealth—and it is thanks to this combination that the expansion of the “powerful” proved irresistible. To put it more simply, the “powerful” man was at the same time a landholder and a government official. The central authority was therefore faced with a compact front that was economically the strongest and socially the most influential.

The power of the aristocracy manifested itself in external affairs as well. The reoccupation of the most important islands of the eastern Mediterranean and of considerable areas of western Asia that had been lost three centuries previously was carried out under the leadership of the Anatolian aristocracy and was indeed its great historic achievement. In the second half of the tenth century its two most prominent representatives, Nicephorus Phocas (963–969) and John Tzimiskes (969–976), occupied the imperial throne one after the other. It seemed as if the supreme authority had become the prerogative of the Anatolian magnates. Furthermore, the attempted usurpations of Bardas Skleros and Bardas Phocas in the early part of the reign of Basil II (976–1025) were put down only after a cruel and prolonged civil war. The well-known addendum to the Novel of Basil II of the year 996 cites as representatives of the inordinate growth of the landholding aristocracy the Cappadocian houses of Phocas and Maleinos, whose power and wealth were allegedly more than a century old at the time.¹⁸ This addendum which, according to the plausible view of Zachariae von Lingenthal,¹⁹ was the work of the Emperor himself, mentions the father and grandfather of the Phocas family, and cites by name the patrician Constantine Maleinos and his son, the magistros Eustathius. It was this same Eustathius who, a short time prior to that, gave a royal reception on his estates for the Emperor Basil II on the latter's return with his whole army from an expedition to Syria. The Emperor was so struck by the immense wealth of this Cappadocian magnate that he asked his host to accompany him to the capital. Eustathius never came back. According to an Arab itinerary, made known by Ernst Honigmann, the estates of the Maleinoi occupied an enormous area, calculated by Honigmann as being 115 km. in extent.²⁰

Basil II was the last emperor who attempted to check the upsurge of the landed aristocracy. Under his successors the opposition on the part of the central government to the economic and political aspirations of the aristocracy was, to all intents and purposes, discontinued. Having won their victory, the aristocracy split into two opposing factions, the military nobility of the provinces and the civil nobility of the capital. At first, it was the latter that gained the upper hand and so held power in the second and third quarters of the eleventh century. This was a time of political decay, but also one of cultural flowering, the dominant class being the most cultivated element in the Empire. Among its achievements was the refounding of the University of Constantinople.

¹⁸ Zachariae von Lingenthal, *Jus graeco-romanum*, III, 310, note 23; Zepos, *Jus*, I, 264, note 24.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 311, note 33.

²⁰ E. Honigmann, “Un itinéraire arabe à travers le Pont,” *Annuaire de l'Inst. de philol. et d'hist. orientales et slaves*, 4 (1936), 268 ff.

Under the rule of the urban bureaucratic aristocracy the Senate of Constantinople gained added significance.²¹ Its role had been largely ornamental when Byzantine autocracy was at its height, but now that leadership was assumed by the higher civil servants, i.e., the holders of senatorial rank, the Senate acquired greater importance. Access to the Senate was opened to a broader segment of the capital's population and in this way the urban aristocracy widened the basis of its power.

Given a favorably passive role by the executive, the big landowners, both lay and ecclesiastical, quickly expanded their estates. Furthermore, influential persons were able to acquire revenue from real estate, especially monasteries and monastic lands that were placed under their protection by virtue of the peculiar system of *charistikion*, a system that was widely applied during this period.²² Quite often prominent persons were in charge of several monasteries that had been entrusted to them by the ecclesiastical authorities themselves, if not by the emperor. At the same time the government showed a growing liberality in the granting of special privileges. Exemption from the payment of taxes became a common phenomenon. Not only monasteries, but also important lay landowners came to enjoy financial immunity: while they drew the rates paid by the peasants, they had no obligation vis-à-vis the treasury. Consequently, access to their lands was often forbidden to government officials. In some cases they even enjoyed legal immunity, i.e., they dispensed justice to their own peasants.²³ The landholdings of lay and ecclesiastical lords thus acquired a privileged status, being to a large extent or even completely freed from the intervention of the central government. In other words, the feudalization of the Empire reached a decisive stage. This is the most significant fact of Byzantine social history in the eleventh century. Its consequence was the collapse of the social and economic structure on which the power of the Empire had been founded in previous centuries.²⁴

Some historians do not recognize the existence of feudal relations in Byzantium and object to the very use of the term "feudalism" in speaking of Byzantine conditions. If the dispute is not merely verbal, we should try to make clear what precisely is in question. Now, there can be no doubt that the disagreement is caused not so much by a different evaluation of certain phe-

²¹ Cf. H.-G. Beck, *Senat und Volk von Konstantinopel. Probleme der byzantinischen Verfassungsgeschichte*, S. B. d. Bayer. Akad. d. Wiss., philos.-hist. Kl. (1966), H. 6.

²² Cf. the important recent study of H. Ahrweiler, "Charisticariat et autres formes d'attribution de fondations pieuses aux Xe-XI^e siècles," *Zbornik radova Vizant. Inst.*, 10 (1967), 1ff., where the older literature is quoted. See also P. Lemerle, "Un aspect du rôle des monastères à Byzance: les monastères donnés à des laïcs, les charistaires," *Comptes-rendus de l'Acad. des Inscr. et Belles-Lettres* (Jan.-March 1967), 9ff.

²³ Cf. G. Ostrogorski, "K istorii immuniteta v Vizantii," *Vizantijskij Vremennik*, 13 (1958), 55ff. = *Byzantion*, 28 (1958), 165ff.

²⁴ The significance of the changes that occurred during this period has been rightly emphasized by the majority of authors who have dealt with the critical years 1025-1081. Cf., e.g., R. J. H. Jenkins, *The Byzantine Empire on the Eve of the Crusades* (London, 1953); P. Charanis, "The Byzantine Empire in the Eleventh Century," in K. M. Setton, *A History of the Crusades*, I (Philadelphia, 1955), 177ff.; S. Vryonis, "Byzantium: The Social Basis of the Decline in the Eleventh Century," *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies*, 2 (1959), 159ff. On the other hand, N. Svoronos, "Société et organisation intérieure dans l'Empire byzantin au XI^e s.," *Proceedings of the XIIIth Intern. Congress of Byz. Studies* (Oxford, 1967), 373ff., does not seem to discover any essential changes during this period.

nomena of Byzantine history, as by a different understanding of the concept of feudalism.^{24a} Essentially, the question is this: Should the term feudalism be limited to the Western Middle Ages, or should it be granted a wider connotation, descriptive of a given economic and social condition that was typical not of the countries of western Europe alone? In other words, what is fundamental for our conception of feudalism: is it the complex hierarchical structure of authority that is characteristic of the West, or is it the presence of the seigneurial estate peopled by dependent peasants which may be observed both in Western Europe and in Byzantium? If we acknowledge, as we must, that the latter was the base on which mediaeval society was built in the West as well as in late Byzantium, then the expression "Byzantine feudalism" will appear natural and its use will not raise any objections.

I do not, of course, mean to say that the economic and social structure of Byzantium was in all respects similar to that of the West: indeed, complete uniformity did not prevail even among separate countries and areas of western Europe. It is, nevertheless, indubitable that in this respect there was a fundamental kinship among all parts of the mediaeval world. One should note the differences, but one should also note the similarities. Setting aside, therefore, the fruitless discussion concerning the existence of feudalism in Byzantium, one should study its characteristics more thoroughly than has been done in the past, and do so from several points of view. In other words, the question should be considered not only in the economic sphere, but also in that of social and political phenomena.

The rule of the epigones of the Macedonian dynasty and that of the dynasty of the Doukai in the second and third quarters of the eleventh century saw the disintegration of the social and economic order on which the might of the Empire had previously been built. The Comneni created a new order, certain elements of which were to remain valid throughout the entire late Byzantine period. The accession of Alexius Comnenus marked the victory of the military aristocracy, but did not mean that the key executive posts were given to the descendants of those famous families which in the tenth century had led the expansion of the landholding nobility. Instead, it was the family of the Comneni that seized power.²⁵

According to Zonaras, Alexius Comnenus "directed affairs not as if they were public and governmental (κοινὰ ἢ δημόσια); he saw himself not as their administrator (οἰκονόμον), but as their master (δεσπότην), and the imperial palace he both considered and called his private house (οἶκος οἰκεῖος)."²⁶ "Alexius,"

^{24a} For a survey of various views and theories relevant to this point, see Kin-ichi Watanabe, "Problèmes de la 'féodalité' Byzantine. Une mise au point sur les diverses discussions," *Hitotsubashi Journal of Arts and Sciences*, V/1 (Jan. 1965), 31-40; VI/1 (Sept. 1965), 7-24.

²⁵ Cf. the interesting remarks of Ja. N. Ljubarskij in his introduction to the Russian translation of Anna Comnena (Moscow, 1965), 10ff. See also *Istorija Vizantii*, II (Moscow, 1967), 296ff. The role played by members of the Comnenian family is also emphasized by A. Hohlweg, *Beiträge zur Verwaltungsgeschichte des oströmischen Reiches unter den Komnenen* (Munich, 1965), but he treats this phenomenon chiefly on the level of biographical detail. On the administrative and military reforms of Alexius I, see H. Ahrweiler, *Byzance et la mer* (Paris, 1966), 175ff., esp. 197ff.

²⁶ Zonaras, ed. Bonn, III, 766.14-16.

says the same source, "distributed among his relatives and some of his servants (τοῖς συγγενέσι καὶ τῶν θεραπόντων τοῖν) cartfuls of money from the public treasury (τὰ δημόσια χρήματα), provided them with ample yearly revenues (χορηγίας ἄδρᾶς ἔτησίους), so that their wealth became excessive; they acquired a suite (ὑπηρεσίαν) of a kind that is more appropriate to emperors than to private individuals, built houses big enough to look like cities and, in point of magnificence, no different from imperial palaces."²⁷ Zonaras was opposed to the policy of Alexius Comnenus and did not refrain from some exaggeration in the expression of his grievances. His statement is, however, supported by the evidence of documents.

From the chrysobull of Alexius I issued to the Lavra of St. Athanasius in August 1084 we know that the Emperor's younger brother, the *Pansebastos* Hadrian, had been granted all the tax revenue of Cassandra (this is the "ample yearly revenue" mentioned by Zonaras), with the result that the monks of Lavra, who owned property in this region, were afraid that, being taxpayers liable to the *pansebastos*, they would be reckoned among his *paroikoi*. The Emperor tried to dispel their fears, but confirmed the fact that the monks of Lavra were obligated to pay to his brother the public taxes on their Cassandra property. He liberated them only from every kind of corvée which Hadrian's men (ἄνθρωποι) had been also demanding.²⁸ An identical situation is portrayed in a *chrysobullon sigillion* addressed by Alexius I to Lavra in October 1092.²⁹ In this document the Emperor liberates a *metochion* of Lavra, situated near Thessalonica, as well as its *paroikoi* from the corvées imposed upon it by the administrators (προνοηταί) of the estates of his brother, the *sebastocrator*, and declares that representatives of the *sebastocrator* will collect from it "only" the taxes due to him (μόνα τὰ ἀνήκοντα τέλη).³⁰ Thus, the Emperor's elder brother, too, the *sebastocrator* Isaac, had been granted tax revenue in the region of Thessalonica.³¹

Alexius Comnenus established a kind of family rule, having surrounded himself with numerous direct relatives and relatives by marriage. From the *Alexiad* of Anna Comnena it may be seen that persons connected with the Comnenian family by kinship or marriage occupied the highest civil and military posts, carried out the most responsible missions, and accompanied the Emperor on campaign. It was they, too, who bore the new sonorous titles introduced by Alexius. Zonaras bitterly complains that while setting apart his own relatives, Alexius "did not show a similar regard to other persons of noble birth,"³² that he did not treat members of the senate with the respect that was due them,

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 767.2-8.

²⁸ G. Rouillard and P. Collomp, *Actes de Lavra*, I (Paris, 1937), No. 39.

²⁹ F. Dölger, *Aus den Schatzkammern des Heiligen Berges* (Munich, 1948), No. 14.

³⁰ These τέλη are not "Pachtzinsen," as Dölger thought (*loc. cit.*), but government taxes. In other words, this case is completely analogous to that of the younger brother, the *pansebastos* Hadrian. One must suppose that the region from which the elder brother, the famous *sebastocrator* Isaac, collected revenue for his own benefit was even more considerable.

³¹ For other similar cases, see H. Ahrweiler, *Byzance et la mer*, 213ff.

³² Zonaras, III, 767.8.

and even tried to humiliate them.³³ Indeed, the old noble families, such as those of Phocas, Scleros, Maleinos, are not mentioned in the pages of the *Alexiad*. In their stead there appear new families of more humble origin. Thus, the dynasty of the Comneni relied in the first instance on its relatives who, endowed with extraordinary honors and enormous estates, formed the highest nobility and the main bulwark of the government, while the wider basis on which the newly-created system rested was provided by the middle and lower gentry, from whose ranks emerged the class of the *pronoïars*.

With the collapse of the old class of soldiers, the core of the Empire's military forces in the eleventh century was, once again, formed by foreign mercenaries. But in the period of the Comneni there also appear local armies created by the system of the *pronoia*.³⁴ By means of imperial donation, the *pronoïar* received for his use and administration (εἰς πρὸνοιαν) various benefits, in particular landed property together with the *paroikoi* settled on it, in return for which he assumed the obligation of military service. Like the soldiers of the preceding period, the *pronoïars* are called *stratiotai*—the term *προνόιάριος* was used seldom and only unofficially, while the term *προνότης* had nothing to do with *pronoia*—but on the social scale they formed a sharp contrast to the older soldiers who belonged to the peasant class. The *pronoïars* were knights and masters of the *paroikoi* who tilled their lands.³⁵ As the military undertakings of the Comneni grew in extent, the importance of the *pronoia* system and the role of the *pronoïars* increased correspondingly. The testimony of the sources, meager as it is, leaves no doubt that this system was already in force under Alexius I and John II, and that the distribution of *pronoiai* became particularly widespread under Manuel I, which is understandable in view of this Emperor's far-flung military ventures.³⁶

³³ *Ibid.*, 766.17. Cf. Beck, *Senat und Volk von Konstantinopel*, 56ff.

³⁴ Cf. G. Ostrogorsky, *Pour l'histoire de la féodalité byzantine* (Brussels, 1954), 26ff.

³⁵ The origins of an army of knights, which was later destined to replace the peasant militia of the former *stratiotai*, may be sought at the time of Nicephorus Phocas. This Emperor issued the well-known decree that the estates owned by *stratiotai* should thenceforth have a minimum value of 12 lbs. of gold, instead of 4 lbs. as previously. He explained this measure by the demands of the newly introduced heavy armor (Zepos, *Jus*, I, 255ff.). These heavily armed warriors to whom Nicephorus Phocas wished to guarantee estates of such value could not obviously have been simple peasants. They must have belonged to the lower nobility—the same class from which later sprang the *pronoïars*.

³⁶ Cf. Ostrogorsky, *Féodalité*, 26ff.; H. Ahrweiler, *Byzance et la mer*, 214ff.; P. Charanis, "The Monastic Properties and the State in the Byzantine Empire," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 4 (1948), 91. A. Hohlweg, "Zur Frage der Pronoia in Byzanz," *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, 60 (1967), 288ff., attempts to cast doubt on the existence of the *pronoia* system under the Comneni by pointing out that the relevant evidence of the sources is scanty—a fact that is perfectly well known. However, after a lengthy discussion of the oft-quoted passage of Nicetas Choniates, he admits himself (304) that it concerns the distribution of *pronoiai* under Manuel I. See also the same author's *Beiträge zur Verwaltungsgeschichte des oströmischen Reiches*, 82–93, and the review of this work by H. Ahrweiler, *BZ*, 60 (1967), 116ff., who quite rightly remarks that the chapter concerning the *pronoia* "reste assez confus." Cf. also P. Lemerle, "Recherches sur le régime agraire à Byzance. La terre militaire à l'époque des Comnènes," *Cahiers de civilisation médiévale*, 2 (1959), 265ff. In spite of the thorough scepticism which characterizes this article, its author does not doubt the significance of the aforementioned passage of Choniates, and he states that this piece of evidence as well as the mention of *pronoia* in the Lavra document of 1162 (whose indications go back to an earlier period) lead us, as he cautiously says, "à l'origine d'une importante institution byzantine" (280). We may here leave aside his reservation that this institution did not imply either "fiefs militaires" or "une féodalité militaire." We may, however, note that in addition to the Lavra document of 1162 and other documents of the twelfth century, the term *pronoia*

The typical representative of Byzantine aristocracy under the epigones of the Macedonian dynasty and under the dynasty of the Doukai was the civil nobleman who was a member of the senate, whereas under the Comneni it was the knight or *pronoiar* who, as we have already said, usually belonged to the lower or middle gentry. The size of the *pronoiar*'s estate must have corresponded to that of the suite which accompanied him on campaign. The existence of personal suites and, indeed, of military detachments belonging to Byzantine noblemen and generals is amply attested. This is a fact deserving the closest attention.

There exists, it is true, a study by H.-G. Beck devoted to the question of the retinue in Byzantium,³⁷ but this study, interesting and perceptive as it is, constitutes only the first step in the investigation of this phenomenon, being limited to its initial period. Beck is particularly concerned with the analysis of a passage of the biography of Basil I which relates that the young Basil entered the service of Theophilitzes, having determined "to join some powerful and famous person and place himself in the latter's service."³⁸ Beck compares this passage to other evidence of the ninth, tenth, and first half of the eleventh centuries. Most of his comparative material, however, has to do with the *hetairia* which collected round the person of the emperor. This is a phenomenon of a different kind, namely a group of courtiers or, as we might say, a court clique such as ordinarily appears in the entourage of a monarch.³⁹ What interests us is the phenomenon of the specifically mediaeval retinue. The *Vita Basilii* only contains some interesting hints of this phenomenon whose characteristic traits are more fully revealed by later sources.

The Byzantine nobleman was surrounded by a suite, the composition of which was often rather heterogeneous. Its members were called by different names indicative of their subservient position vis-à-vis their master.⁴⁰ The most frequently used terms are ἀνθρῶπος, οἰκείος or οἰκείος ἀνθρῶπος which corre-

is already mentioned in the typicon of John II for the Pantocrator monastery of Constantinople, dated October 1136, where it mentions a pronoia of Synadenos, then deceased (A. Dmitrievskij, *Opisanie liturgiĭeskikh rukopisej*, I [Kiev, 1895], 697). This has been pointed out by H. Ahrweiler, *op. cit.*, 220. We need not, therefore, wonder whether or not the *pronoia* system existed under John II. Cf. now G. Ostrogorsky, "Die Pronoia unter den Komnenen," *Zbornik radova Vizant. Inst.*, 12 (1970), 41 ff.

³⁷ *Byzantinisches Gefolgschaftswesen*, S. B. d. Bayer. Akad. d. Wiss., Philos.-hist. Kl. (1965), H. 5.

³⁸ *Vita Basilii*, Theoph. Cont., 223: τῶν δυνατῶν τινι καὶ περιφανῶν προσμῖξαι καὶ εἰς θεραπείαν καὶ δουλείαν αὐτὸν ἀποτάξαι καὶ ἀποστήσαι. Cf. *ibid.*, 224.

³⁹ This confusion of heterogeneous phenomena influences Beck's conclusions. Thus, he explains the existence of a *hetairia* of Theophilitzes (the first patron of Basil the Macedonian) by this person's social prestige. He affirms, however, that in most cases *hetairiai*—he has in view imperial ones, and in particular that of Michael III—were "associations having political and especially conspiratorial aims" (*op. cit.*, 29). Yet, the observations contained in this witty and perceptive article on Basil's role in the *hetairia* of Michael III are not without interest. Gradually, as Beck points out, Basil created, as κύριος, his own group which enabled him to kill Bardas and then Michael III himself. In this way the same person could be simultaneously both δοῦλος and κύριος. Beck notes in this connection: "Die Analogie zum westlichen Lehnswesen, das den Lehnsträger kennt, der zugleich selbst Belehrender einem dritten gegenüber ist, drängt sich auf" (17, note 3). This conclusion, it seems to me, goes rather too far inasmuch as it is based on the example of Basil I and has in view the conditions of the ninth century.

⁴⁰ Some interesting observations on terminology are made by Beck, *op. cit.*, 7 ff.

spond completely to *homo, familiaris* or *domesticus familiaris* current in western feudal society. The term *οἰκεῖος* was likewise used to denote the position of Byzantine dignitaries in relation to the emperor.⁴¹ Thus, the emperor had his own *οἰκεῖοι*, while the feudal magnates who were the emperor's *οἰκεῖοι*, had, in turn, *οἰκεῖοι* of their own.

Also frequent are the appellations *ὑπηρεταί*, *ὑπηρετούμενοι* and especially *θεράποντες*, i.e., "servants." These, however, were not always servants in the normal sense. Thus, while preparing a rebellion on behalf of Isaac Comnenus, Catacalon Cecaumenus revealed his design, in the first instance, "to his servants and relatives" (*τοῖς ἑαυτοῦ θεράπονσι καὶ συγγενέσι*).⁴² In the battle against the Pechenegs in 1049, which ended with the flight of the Byzantine army, he alone continued fighting, *μετὰ τῶν ἑαυτοῦ στὰς θεραπόντων καὶ τινων συγγενῶν ὀλιγοστών*.⁴³ The *proedros* Theodosius Monomachus set out against the Emperor Michael VI having gathered his *οἰκογενεῖς καὶ δούλους καὶ τοὺς ἄλλως ὑπηρετουμένους αὐτῷ*.⁴⁴ We may also recall the complaint of Zonaras to the effect that the relatives of Alexius I acquired too numerous a suite (*ὑπηρεσίαν*).⁴⁵ His protest is directed only at the size of their suites—"of a kind that befitted emperors rather than private individuals"—and he thereby acknowledges that it would have been normal for them to have suites such as befitted their station.

In helping Isaac Comnenus to gain the throne, the aforementioned Catacalon Cecaumenus contributed two regular regiments and, in addition, his "own people," his *οἰκεῖοι*.⁴⁶ Consequently, Byzantine generals had their private military units. This fact, whose social and political significance is obvious, is confirmed by a large body of testimony. A soldier belonging to a private retinue is often designated by the term *ὑπασπιστής*, i.e., a "shieldbearer" or "guard." Rather more rarely we find the equally significant designation *ὁπαδός*, a "follower." Influential persons had numerous guards of this kind. Thus, Nicephorus Botaniates, the future emperor, while he was *magistros* and *dux* of Antioch, resisted a Turkish attack in 1067 with the help of "his own guards (*τῶν οἰκείων ὑπασπιστῶν*) and some foreign forces," according to the Continuator of Skylitzes;⁴⁷ while, according to Michael Attaliates, he did so with the help of "local inhabitants and his own guards" (*τῶν ἰδίων ὑπασπιστῶν*).⁴⁸ Nicephorus Basi-

⁴¹ The word *οἰκεῖος* assumes this meaning as an official designation. In earlier sources we find with the same connotation the term *οἰκειακοί* (*ἄνθρωποι*) — a fact which Beck, *op. cit.*, 8, note 1, mistakenly denies. Cf. Theophanes, 373.23, 385.25, 400.6, 455.5. These passages referring to events of the eighth century have to do with persons belonging to the entourage of emperors and empresses. The same in *De Caesaribus*, I, 174.24, 175.3 and the letter of Theodore of Nicaea, ed. J. Darrouzès, *Epistoliers byzantins du Xe siècle* (Paris, 1960), 308.29. Cf. Verpeaux, "Les 'οἰκεῖοι'. Notes d'histoire institutionnelle et sociale," *Rev. des ét. byz.*, 23 (1965), 90.

⁴² Scylitzes-Cedrenus, II, 625.1.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 599.12.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 612.20. This passage is quoted by Beck, *op. cit.*, 27, who rightly observes that *δοῦλοι* denote servants in the narrow sense, while the *ἄλλως ὑπηρετούμενοι αὐτῷ* refer to the suite (*Gefolgschaft*).

⁴⁵ See *supra*, p. 10.

⁴⁶ Scylitzes-Cedrenus, II, 625.19: *τὰ δύο Ῥωμαϊκὰ τάγματα, μετ' ἐκεῖνα δὲ καὶ τοὺς οἰκείους*. This formulation expresses as clearly as possible the difference between regular army units entrusted to Cecaumenus by the central authority and the militia consisting of his own people.

⁴⁷ Scylitzes cont., 663.2.

⁴⁸ Attaliates, 96.9. The guards of Nicephorus Botaniates are mentioned *ibid.*, 41.20.

lakes, who raised a rebellion against Michael VII, had among his forces, "not a few of his own guards" (καὶ οἰκείους ὑπασπιστάς οὐκ ὀλίγους).⁴⁹

Of particular interest are the indications given by Cecaumenus, the author of the *Strategicon*. In relating the plot that was hatched in Thessaly while his grandfather, Nikolitzas, was residing there, Cecaumenus says that the plotters were afraid lest Nikolitzas "cause them many worries, *since he has men and his own army*" (ἀνθρώπους γὰρ ἔχει καὶ λαὸν ἴδιον).⁵⁰ Equally instructive in this context is the advice of Cecaumenus that, in the event of a rebellion, one should bring into the fort as much provision "as would be sufficient for yourself, your family, your slaves and the freemen *who will have to mount horses together with you and go into battle.*"⁵¹ The term "slaves" (δοῦλοι) means here servants in general, whereas the "freemen" (ἐλεύθεροι) were the actual members of the suite who accompanied their master on campaign, together with his relatives and servants.

The appearance of retinues in Byzantium, as Beck has correctly pointed out,⁵² was not a juridically defined institution and for this reason it has left no trace in official enactments. This is why we have had to avail ourselves of more or less fortuitous indications of the narrative sources. However, the data adduced—and it would be easy to multiply their number—leave no doubt in my mind that the typically mediaeval, feudal *Gefolgschaftswesen* not only existed in Byzantium, but acquired from the eleventh century onward considerable extension. Particularly indicative is the testimony of Cecaumenus whose work reflects a situation that was normal and, indeed, common. In speaking of the feudal retinue, he has in view not the great magnates who attracted the attention of the chroniclers, but that middle aristocracy to which he himself belonged and which he addressed in his admonitions.

We may imagine that *pronoïars*, too, had similar retinues. We have, unfortunately, no direct evidence concerning the structure of the army as based on the *pronoia* system, a structure that, once again, was not defined by specific regulations.⁵³ However, it is difficult to conceive that owners of patrimonial estates should have had retinues, and *pronoïars* not. Furthermore, the preamble by Alyates to the *praktikon* of a soldier-*pronoïar* (probably of the thirteenth century), recently studied by I. Ševčenko, contains a fairly clear allusion to the retinue accompanying a *pronoïar*.⁵⁴

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 297.21.

⁵⁰ *Cecaumeni Strategicon*, ed. Wassiliewsky-Jernstedt, 68.7.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 65.4. For further testimony of Cecaumenus which serves to recreate the feudal life of his period, see the informative article by G. G. Litavrin, "Byl li Kekavmen, avtor 'Strategikona,' feodalom?" *Vizant. očerki* (Moscow, 1961), 217ff.

⁵² *Op. cit.*, 28ff.

⁵³ Accurate information on the size of *pronoïar* armies exists only for Morea under Latin rule and Zeta under Venetian domination—in both cases there existed prescribed norms. Cf. Ostrogorsky, *Feodalitë*, 57ff. and 222ff. On Zeta, see also I. Božić, "Proniarii et capita," *Zbornik radova Vizant. Inst.*, 8/1 (1963), 61ff.

⁵⁴ I. Ševčenko, "On the Preface to a Praktikon by Alyates," *Jahrb. d. österr. byz. Gesellschaft*, 17 (1968), 65ff. The passage that interests us reads ἐκ τοῦ περὶ αὐτὸν πολυαρίθμου συνασπισμοῦ (71.6). Ševčenko translates, "on account of the large numbers in the knight's (?) retinue" (72). In spite of the caution expressed by the question mark and the reservation made in a footnote ("obscure sentence"), this translation is undoubtedly correct and the author's conclusions (70) are convincing, as shown by the comparable passages of Scylitzes and Attaliates quoted *supra*.

The presence of free men in the retinues of Byzantine noblemen shows that persons not belonging to the peasant class could have their own lords from whom they depended instead of being directly subject to the emperor. In other words, there existed within Byzantine feudal relations a certain hierarchy of power, though certainly the feudal ladder did not have as many rungs as it did in the West.

We may quote here the example of Eustathius Boilas, *protospatharios* and *hypatos*, known to us through the will he composed in 1059, a document full of interesting data.⁵⁵ Boilas was an aristocratic landowner who had fairly substantial estates and a considerable number of slaves; yet he had his own lord (αὐθέντης) in the person, first, of the *dux* Michael Apocapes, vicegerent of the region and a magnate of the eastern part of the Empire, and later, after his death, in the person of the latter's son, the *magistros* Basil.⁵⁶ Going down the ladder, Boilas had his own *familiares* (τοὺς οἰκείους μου), and he donated lands not only to his relatives and his freedmen, but also to other persons.⁵⁷

The typicon of the monastery of the Virgin Kosmosoteira near Ainos tells us that in two villages belonging to the *sebastocrator* Isaak Comnenus, third son of the Emperor Alexius I, there were soldiers subject to the *sebastocrator* and paying taxes to him (εἰσὶ τινες στρατιῶται ὑποτελεῖς ἡμῶν).⁵⁸ After the *sebastocrator's* death, they, together with the villages in question, were going to devolve to the monastery.⁵⁹ According to the typicon, these soldiers oppressed their neighbors, "behaved shamelessly" even with regard to the administrator of the *sebastocrator's* estates, and neglected their obligation to pay taxes. And yet, the *sebastocrator* advises the abbot of the monastery to treat them favorably and invite them to his table so as to make them his helpers and friends, capable of repelling brigands by force. It is not easy to determine the social position of these soldiers. They were not, of course, *stratiotai* of the old type belonging to the "poor" class. One may perhaps compare them to the petty *pronoiar*-soldiers that occur in later documents.⁶⁰ In any case, we have here an example of soldiers subject not to the emperor, but, first, to one of the emperor's sons and then to a monastery founded by the latter.⁶¹

⁵⁵ V. N. Benešević, "Zavešćanie vizantijskogo bojarina XI veka," *Žurnal Minist. Nar. Prosv.*, N.S. 9 (May 1907), 219–231. Cf. S. Vryonis, "The Will of a Provincial Magnate, Eustathius Boilas (1059)." *DOP*, 11 (1957), 263 ff., where this remarkable document is translated into English and annotated.

⁵⁶ Benešević, *op. cit.*, 222.32, 224.3, 222.34.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 230.7, 223.34–224.2. Cf. A. P. Každan, *Derevnja i gorod v Vizantii IX–X vv.* (Moscow, 1960), 118; *idem*, *Istorija Vizantii*, 2 (Moscow, 1967), 247.

⁵⁸ L. Petit, "Typikon du monastère de la Kosmosotira près d'Aenos," *Izv. Russk. Arkheol. Inst. v Konstant.*, 13 (1908), 71.14.

⁵⁹ Cf. the typicon of John II Comnenus for the Pantocrator monastery which mentions ἑστρατευμένοι residing in the village Thymbaki: Dmitrievskij, *Opisanie liturgičeskikh rukopisej*, I, 697.

⁶⁰ E.g., the group of petty *pronoiar*-soldiers from Serres called Clazomenites in the *chrysoboullon sigillion* of John V Palaeologus or of John VI Cantacuzenus of 1342 (Lemerle, *Actes de Kuthumus*, No. 20; Dölger, *Schatzkammen*, No. 16) or the group of the Barbarenoi in a series of acts of the thirties and forties of the fourteenth century. Cf. Ostrogorsky, *Féodalité*, 124, 155 ff.

⁶¹ If it is true that the soldiers in question were *pronoïars*, it would be necessary to modify an opinion previously expressed by me, viz. that no *pronoïars* in the service of a monastery were known in Byzantium (*Féodalité*, 191). In Serbia, where the *pronoïa* system was borrowed from Byzantium, this

The center of the *sebastocrator's* very extensive holdings was Neokastron, where, in the *kastron* itself, stood his lordship's manor (οἰκήματα δεσποτικά). Peasants lived next to it, and it was here, too, that a yearly fair was held. He owned a second *kastron* called Ἀετός (probably on account of its elevated position) together with a village that pertained to it; he also had real estate at Ainos itself, an inhabited trading-place (ἐμπόριον), twelve boats, fisheries on the river Maritsa, and a great number of villages and estates (προάστια).⁶²

The owner of such great possessions must have needed his own administrative apparatus. We have already encountered the "men" (ἄνθρωποι) of the younger brother of Alexius I, the *pansebastos* Hadrian, and the administrators (προνοηταί) of his elder brother, the *sebastocrator* Isaac. As we have just seen, the son of Alexius I, also called the *sebastocrator* Isaac, the founder of the monastery of Kosmosoteira, had his own *pronoetai*. In his typicon he also speaks of his assistants whom he calls the men "closest to me" (οἱ οἰκειότατοι ἄνθρωποί μου). It is noteworthy that some of these bore titles borrowed from the imperial court. He had not only a secretary (γραμματικός) who was his οἰκειότατος and κατὰ πάντα ὑποχέριος, but also a *vestiarites* and a *pinkernes*. Isaac bestowed landholdings on all his *familiars*; after their death the villages given to them were to pass into the possession of the monastery.⁶³

One must emphasize the fact that the phenomena described in the typicon of Isaac Comnenus were not at all exceptional. In later documents we often find even on the estates of more humble feudal lords their "men" (ἄνθρωποι) and *familiars* (οἰκεῖοι ἄνθρωποι) who were in their personal service and are clearly distinguished from the dependent peasant population.⁶⁴ The same term ἄνθρωπος also denoted vassals in their relation to the emperor.^{64a}

Of course feudal relationships in Byzantium did not come into being under the influence of Western models, but rather as a consequence of developments

kind of *pronoia* is well known and, indeed, occurs in the earliest Serbian document mentioning the *pronoia* (cf. *Feodalité*, 187ff.).

An example of a *pronoia* grant made by a feudal magnate is found in a document of the fourteenth century relating to Epirus: the great constable John Tzaphas Orsini Doukas, a vassal of Tsar Symeon (half-brother of Stephen Dušan) bestowed on his nephew and fellow-countryman an estate διὰ προνοίας. See the chrysobull of Tsar Symeon dated January 1361: A. Soloviev and B. Mošin, *Grčke povelje srpskih vladara* (Belgrade, 1936), No. 32.42.

⁶² "Typikon du monastère de la Kosmosotira," par. 69, pp. 52-3.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, esp. par. 107 (pp. 69-70) and par. 69 (p. 52). An early example of the granting of court titles to members of a magnate's entourage is found in the *Vita Basilii* (Theoph. Cont., 307.1), where it is told that Apostypes, *strategos* of Thrace and Macedonia, had his own *protostrator* and his own *cubicularius*, the latter being "first among his *familiars*" (πρῶτος τῶν οἰκιστῶν αὐτοῦ).

⁶⁴ We may quote here a few characteristic examples from the charters of the monastery of Panagia Lembiotissa near Smyrna, referring to the thirteenth century: Andronicus Xanthos, some members of whose family served as functionaries of the Smyrna metropolis, is mentioned in 1253 as the ἄνθρωπος of Irene, wife of the *protovestiarites* Zagarommates (Miklosich and Müller, 4, 233); another one of her "men" was Theodore Lapardas, who belonged to the same kind of family as Xanthos, and who in 1261 administered one of her estates (*ibid.*, 234). In the same region of Smyrna we find in 1268 the "glorious kyr" Michael Kinnamos who was οἰκεῖος ἄνθρωπος of the *sebastocrator* Constantine Tornikes (*ibid.*, 89). Cf. H. Ahrweiler, "L'histoire et la géographie de la région de Smyrne entre les deux occupations turques (1081-1317), particulièrement au XIII^e siècle," *Travaux et mémoires*, 1 (1965), 112, 114, 149.

^{64a} E.g., the princes of Lesser Armenia in relation to the Emperor Alexius I: Anna Comnena, ed. Leib, III, 134.4.

within the Empire itself that were the result of the greatly increased power of the Byzantine aristocracy. But closer contacts with the Western world in the era of the Crusades did leave their mark, and Western customs and institutions were adopted the more readily since the ground had been prepared for them by these internal developments. The Empire took over the institution of liege homage, and the term itself was employed (*λίλιος*, a "liege-man"), though it was used primarily for imperial vassals of Western origin.⁶⁵ Another noteworthy point is that the custom of taking an oath of fealty to the emperor was very widely adopted in the Comnenian period.⁶⁶

This contact with the Western feudal world became especially intimate after 1204, with the appearance of the Latin empire and of a string of Latin princedoms in the Balkans. And in these circumstances it became clear that the state of things which the Western conquerors encountered in their new possessions was quite familiar to them. They could take over a great deal without having to make many changes. There was no essential difference between the Byzantine *pronoia* and the Western fief, and *The Chronicle of the Morea* constantly uses both these terms quite interchangeably.⁶⁷ In describing the Crusaders' conquest of the Peloponnese it provides us with the fullest and most instructive account of the social relationships which came into being in occupied Byzantine territory and of the position of the Byzantine aristocracy under Latin domination. One gets the impression that at the time of the conquest the leading role in the Peloponnese was played by the *pronoïars*, which incidentally shows how important the institution of *pronoia* had then become, and how widely extended it was. Resistance to the invader continued so long as the *pronoïars* sustained it, and they indulged in voluntary submission only on condition of being allowed to retain their *pronoia*-holdings. These holdings were the chief point of contention, one side trying to acquire as many as possible, the other striving to retain control of them wherever it could.⁶⁸

In addition, *pronoia* continued to be an institution of the greatest significance in the peripheral Greek states which sprang up during the period of the Latin empire. It is to be met with in the few sources which refer to Epirus and, more especially, in the comparatively numerous surviving documents from the area of the Nicaean empire. The new states in Asia Minor and Northern

⁶⁵ Cf. J. Ferluga, "La ligesse dans l'Empire byzantin," *Zbornik radova Viz. Inst.*, 7 (1961), 97ff.

⁶⁶ This has been pointed out by N. Svoronos, "Le serment de fidélité à l'empereur byzantin et sa signification constitutionnelle," *REByz*, 9 (1952), 106ff., who rightly observes that the growing feudalization of Byzantium created social relations similar to those of the West. He is guilty, however, of some exaggeration when he speaks of the reciprocal and bilateral character of the oath of fealty in Byzantium and of its full correspondence to the Western oath (136 and *passim*).

⁶⁷ Cf. Ostrogorsky, *Féodalité*, 55ff.

⁶⁸ In the light of these facts, it is difficult to understand the view that the institution of the *pronoia* did not yet exist at this time: so D. Jacoby, "Les archontes grecs et la féodalité en Morée franque," *Travaux et mémoires*, 2 (1967), 421-81. He attempts to explain away the frequent mention of *pronoïai* and *pronoïars* in the *Chronicle of Morea* regarding the early stages of the conquest of the Peloponnese with the arbitrary assumption that all of these allusions were later introduced by the compiler of the *Chronicle* and reflect, as he thinks, the conditions not of the early thirteenth, but of the early fourteenth century. However, I have not been able to find in his lengthy study any positive proof that might have justified this hypothesis.

Greece were set up through the vigor and power of the Byzantine aristocracy; so it was natural that its representatives should occupy the controlling position in them. The social system which evolved was in all essentials similar to that which had come about under the Comneni and had been so characteristic of their epoch. On the one hand, we find hereditary estates, sometimes very large ones, in the possession of the higher aristocracy, the people close to the throne; on the other, *pronoia*-holdings, usually less extensive, under the control of *stratiotai*, military men from the ranks of the lesser notables. Such, at any rate, are the *pronoiai* of which we have evidence in the documents from the reigns of Theodore I Lascaris and, more particularly, John III Vatatzes.⁶⁹ It is noteworthy that Western knights are found in service under the Nicaean emperors, alongside Byzantine *pronoiar-stratiotai*. One of these Westerners, Syrgares, whom the documents call ὁ λίλιος καβαλλάριος of the Emperor, held several villages in *pronoia* and was constantly engaged in litigation against the neighboring monastery of Lembiotissa—as, for that matter, were also native Byzantine *pronoiards*.⁷⁰

The anti-aristocratic policy followed by Theodore II Lascaris proved to be only a brief episode, and Michael Palaeologus' accession heralded a new triumph for the Byzantine upper class. Depending for support as he did upon the great notables, the new Emperor generously rewarded them with lands and privileges; the *pronoiards* made important gains as well. Breaking sharply with original practice, the Emperor granted his supporters the right to bequeath their *pronoia*-holdings⁷¹ and from that time onward, particularly in the fourteenth century, this concession was made more and more frequently. At the same time the estates of the *pronoiards* became larger and larger. Although the heritable *pronoia* did not lose its most characteristic feature and remained essentially a conditional tenure to which certain defined services were attached, nevertheless, these developments inevitably blurred the lines of demarcation between *pronoia* tenure and hereditary property, and, in so doing, reflected the basic features of the Empire's internal development under the Palaeologi; the strengthening of the land-owning aristocracy and the concurrent weakening of the central power, together with its ever-increasing pliability in face of the demands of the notables.

The holding of large estates, fortified by privilege, which had become the chief factor in Byzantine social history in the eleventh century, reached its apogee during the Palaeologan empire, especially in the fateful era of the fourteenth century. Never had the territorial possessions of the greater feuda-

⁶⁹ Cf. H. Glykatzis-Ahrweiler, "La politique agraire des empereurs de Nicée," *Byzantion*, 28 (1958), 51 ff., 135 f. Cf. also P. Charanis, "On the Social Structure and Economic Organization of the Byzantine Empire in the Thirteenth Century and Later," *Byzantinosl.*, 12 (1951), 94 ff., and "The Aristocracy of Byzantium in the Thirteenth Century," *Studies in Honor of A. C. Johnson* (Princeton, 1951), 336 ff. In his valuable comments, Charanis does not always distinguish sufficiently between hereditary estates and *pronoiai*. Thus, it does not appear from the sources that the *parakoimomenos* Constantine Ducas Nestongus, the Emperor's uncle, was a *pronoiar* (344); the same should be said of the magnates enumerated on 345 and 346.

⁷⁰ Cf. Charanis, "Social Structure," 97 ff.; "Aristocracy," 341 ff.

⁷¹ Pachymeres, I, 321.8. Cf. Ostrogorsky, *Feodalité*, 94 ff.

tories and the most celebrated monasteries grown so rapidly, and never had privileges been granted to them on so wide a scale as during this period when the Byzantine State was inexorably declining.

The surviving contemporary documents that throw light on this state of things come, of course, from monastic archives and in the great majority of cases they have to do with monastic properties. This circumstance must affect our overall picture and may, to some extent, distort the perspective in which we view the development of large-scale landholding in Byzantium, since we have a much better and more direct view of the monastic situation than of the secular one. However, in studying the documents we observe that monastic lands are constantly found adjoining those of secular feudatories, whether hereditary owners or *pronoïars*, with whom the monks frequently come into conflict. Unquestionably, the lands of the leading monasteries had grown more and more extensive, but secular estates had not lagged behind, especially those of people who had managed to become influential at court.

With the growth in the material wealth of the aristocracy it was natural that their social status should also be enhanced, as well as their influence in determining the most vital affairs of state. The impoverished Empire fell into material dependance upon the great families. More than once in the fourteenth century armies were raised and warships were built with money donated by wealthy aristocrats. John Cantacuzene himself bears witness to the vast riches that were concentrated in the hands of a number of notable families. Speaking in his *History* of the losses he had suffered as a result of the anti-aristocratic movement, he lists the numbers of livestock belonging to him; 1,000 yoke of draught-oxen, 5,000 cows, 2,500 horses, 200 camels, 300 mules, 500 donkeys, 50,000 pigs and 70,000 sheep.⁷² These enormous figures seem incredible; however, the author would not have cited figures which his readers would think wholly implausible. Riches of this order are all the more striking against the background of the utter impoverishment of the state treasury, and they go a long way toward explaining the upsurge of popular indignation against their owners which broke out in the towns of the Empire during the civil war of the 1340's. In the typical Byzantine village of the times, the peasant who owned a yoke of oxen could consider himself to be well set up; most people had only one or, more often, no draught animals at all, and owners of two yoke of oxen were very rare indeed.⁷³

The anti-aristocratic movement, however, which settled accounts with the supporters of Cantacuzene and forced him to flee in search of help to the court of the Serbian king, did not come into being in the impoverished villages of the countryside. It was in the towns of Thrace and Macedonia that it showed itself in all its bitterness; and in Salonica it led to the ascendancy of the Zealot party, which prevailed for a considerable time (1342-49). This point need not surprise us, for the same land-owning aristocracy that governed the countryside held

⁷² Cantacuzenus, II, 185.4.

⁷³ Cf. Ostrogorskij, "Vizantijskie piscovyie knigi," *Byzantinosl.*, 9 (1948), 253ff. = *Feodalité*, 312ff.

sway in the towns too.⁷⁴ The urban governors came from its ranks, and the town councils were in the hands of its representatives.⁷⁵ Of course, there were merchants and artisans to be found in Byzantine towns, but these "middling people," as the sources call them, were completely overshadowed. The "middling people" in Byzantium were, as a class, not much akin to those rising city-merchants and artisans, animated by a new strength and self-confidence, who were to be found in the West. Not the "middling people" but representatives of the local land-owning notables played the decisive role in the late Byzantine city. This difference, it is worth pointing out, explains better than anything else why Byzantium, which had once occupied a dominating position in world trade, became powerless to compete with the Italian cities and, after being speedily relegated by them to second place, was finally swept out of competition altogether.

The years of the anti-aristocratic movement in the towns of Thrace and Eastern Macedonia and of the Zealot ascendancy in Salonica confronted the Byzantine aristocracy with a serious crisis. The supporters of Cantacuzene, who was the leader of the aristocracy, suffered in particular. Popular indignation turned against them and they were harassed also by the regency in Constantinople. The government of John Palaeologus systematically confiscated its opponents' estates and awarded them to its own supporters. The Byzantine aristocracy was undergoing a process of subdivision, and, associated with this, a certain redistribution of its territorial assets was taking place. In the troubled times of the civil war some suffered losses while others were able to enrich themselves.^{75a} In the final reckoning it was not the aristocracy which lost in the troubles of the 1340's. The real defeat, decisive and irreparable, was that sustained by the Byzantine State, which was completely exhausted by the long and cruel civil war. The imperial treasury was empty. Rich and extensive provinces had been lost. Worse than this, the territory of the Empire had not merely been greatly reduced; it was also losing its unity. Salonica, the greatest city after Constantinople, was cut off by the conquests of Stephen Dušan. Further, the unity of the sovereign authority itself was becoming only a matter of theory.

⁷⁴ On Late Byzantine cities, see E. Kirsten, "Die byzantinische Stadt," *Berichte zum XI. Intern. Byzantinisten-Kongress. München 1958*, 34 ff.; A. P. Každan, "Gorod i derevnja v Vizantii v XI-XII vv.," *Actes du XII^e Congrès Intern. d'Etudes byz.*, I (Ochrid-Belgrade, 1963), 31 ff., and the subsidiary report of D. Angelov, *ibid.*, 293 ff.; E. Frances, "La féodalité et les villes byzantines aux XIII^e et XIV^e siècles," *Byzantinosl.*, 16 (1955), 76 ff.

⁷⁵ Cf. C. P. Kyrris, "The Political Organization of the Byzantine Urban Classes between 1204 and 1341," *Liber memorialis Antonio Era* (1963), 21 ff.; *idem*, "Representative Assemblies and Taxation in the Byzantine Empire between 1204 and 1341," *XII^e Congrès Intern. des Sciences Historiques* (Louvain-Paris, 1966), 47 ff.

^{75a} Thus, John Margarites, who had considerable landed possessions in eastern Macedonia and was a supporter of John Palaeologus, received during the civil war a *pronoia* confiscated from a supporter of John Cantacuzenus and a domain confiscated from Cantacuzenus himself. Cf. P. Lemerle, "Un praktikon inédit des archives de Karakala (janvier 1342) et la situation en Macédoine orientale au moment de l'usurpation de Cantacuzène," *Χαριστήριον εις 'Α. 'Ορλάνδον* (Athens, 1964), 278 ff.; G. Ostrogorsky, "La prise de Serrès par les Turcs," *Byzantion*, 35/1 (1965), 314 ff. After the Serbian conquest, Margarites went on to serve Stephen Dušan, and not only retained his former possessions, but was rewarded with additional ones by his new master.

The idea of dividing up the Empire had been maturing in the minds of some Byzantine magnates for a long time. Right back at the time of the revolt of Bardas Sclerus and Bardas Phocas against Basil II's rule these two rebel leaders came to an agreement whereby, if the revolt had been carried out, one of them would have received the Asiatic portions of the Empire and the other the European. A century later, when plotting the overthrow of Nicephorus III Botaneiates, Nicephorus Melissenus proposed to his brother-in-law Alexius Comnenus a very similar partition. Alexius rejected the plan and was able to satisfy Melissenus by promising him the title of Caesar.⁷⁶ But, as we have seen, Alexius himself, on becoming emperor, rewarded his brothers, if not, indeed, by granting them independent authority to rule over separate provinces, then at least by assigning to them the revenues of these lands. Such grants, it would seem, were one of the root causes of the feudal dismemberment of the Empire.

However that may be, John II Comnenus had, according to Cinnamus, some idea of setting up a separate administration in certain regions of the Empire. If the historian is to be believed, John considered the possibility of making over Cilicia, together with Antioch, Attaleia, and Cyprus, as a hereditary appanage to his son Manuel, with a view to defending it more effectively against the incursions of Raymond of Antioch.⁷⁷

After the collapse of the Empire in 1204, the impulses toward separatism grew stronger and lost no time in asserting themselves. The catastrophe was not only the result of external pressures, but also of internal disruptive forces that had been ripening under the surface. The efforts of Theodore Lascaris to rebuild the Byzantine State in Asia Minor encountered the active opposition of the local magnates Theodore Mancaphas, who had set himself up in Philadelphia as early as 1189, Manuel Maurozomes, who had seized control of the area of the Meander River, and Sabbas Asidenus, who had established a strong position at Sampson near Miletus⁷⁸ and with whom Theodore Lascaris managed to come to an agreement by granting him the title of *sebastocrator*,⁷⁹ just as Alexius Comnenus in his day had made Nicephorus Melissenus caesar.

As the Nicaean empire grew stronger, so did separatist tendencies weaken. However, although they may have died down for the time being, they did not cease to exist under the surface, and they assumed new guises in the restored Palaeologan empire. Furthermore, Epirus and Thessaly lay outside the restored imperial frontiers. The new situation was complicated and inconsistent; hostile relations, frequently leading to armed clashes, alternated with periods of temporary harmony which was strengthened by marriage alliances and the conferring of exalted titles—that of despot to the rulers of Epirus, and *se-*

⁷⁶ Anna Comnena, *Alexiad*, ed. Leib, I, 88f.

⁷⁷ Cinnamus, ed. Bonn, 23.1.

⁷⁸ Acropolites, ed. Heisenberg, 12; Nicetas Choniates, 827f., 842.

⁷⁹ Cf. B. Ferjančić, "Sevastokratori u Vizantiji," *Zbornik radova Viz. Inst.*, 11 (1968), 172. The same kind of thing, it seems, happened to Nicephorus Kontostephanos on whom Theodore Lascaris likewise bestowed the title of *sebastocrator* (*ibid.*, 173).

bastocrator to those of Thessaly. In this way the emperors conferred a *de facto* recognition upon these new political units, while considering their rulers to be their own vassals. The lords of Epirus and Thessaly, in their turn, accepted these exalted titles from the emperors and thus implicitly recognized the suzerain rights of the *basileus* (and even, as one contemporary document⁸⁰ informs us, took an oath of fealty to him), although they none-the-less continued to oppose any reunion with Byzantium.

Under the Palaeologi, members of the ruling family disposed of enormous landed possessions. According to Pachymeres, the Despot John, brother of Michael VIII, held in *pronoia* many islands, especially Mitylene and Rhodes, and also numerous extensive tracts on the mainland.⁸¹ In such cases one should not, however, think of *pronoia* in the exact sense of the word.⁸² Probably John Palaeologus merely enjoyed the revenues from these regions, just as the brothers of Alexius I Comnenus had, as we have seen, enjoyed the revenues of certain provinces assigned to them earlier.⁸³

The dismemberment of the Empire, for which the way had thus been prepared by the development of feudal relationships during the preceding centuries, became a fact in the fourteenth. The question of partition was first posed by the Empress Irene, wife of Andronicus II, who demanded that her husband should divide the Empire between their sons. Andronicus refused outright, and the historian of his reign, Nicephorus Gregoras, in dealing with the conflict between the imperial couple about this matter, adds some forceful strictures of his own. "An unheard-of thing," he wrote; "she wanted her sons to govern not monarchically, in accordance with the age-old custom of the Romans, but after the Latin fashion; that is to say, they would divide the towns and districts of the Romans amongst themselves and each son would rule a separate part, which would thus become his own share and all under his own authority" This Empress, Gregoras goes on to explain, "was by birth one of the Latins (she was a Montferrat princess) and took over this innovation from them, intending to introduce it amongst the Romans."⁸⁴ These reproaches are a characteristic expression of traditional Byzantine concepts of the state. But what is not less characteristic and reminds us of the real condition of affairs at that time is that only a few years later the partition of the Empire did nevertheless take place. After the civil war had broken out the old Emperor was constrained to agree to a division of territory between himself and his grand-

⁸⁰ See the letter of the *protonotarios* of Michael VIII to the representatives of the Papal See of the year 1279, in which the following is said of Nicephorus I, despot of Epirus, and of the Thessalian *sebastocrator* John I: *Subditi, servi et submanuales imperii, sacramentum domino meo sancto imperatori fidelitatis et ligii homagii multoties prestiterunt de parendis preceptis et mandatis suis, a quo dignitates et officia quibus nominati sunt, hactenus acceperunt.* Buchon, *Recherches historiques sur la Principauté française de Morée et ses hautes baronnies*, I (Paris, 1845), 261 note 3. Cf. A. Solovjev, "Fessalijskie arkhonty v XIV veke," *Byzantinosl.*, 4 (1932), 164 note 26; D. Zakythinos, "Processus de féodalisation," *L'Hellénisme contemporain* (Nov.-Dec. 1948), 505; N. Svoronos, *op. cit.*, 140.

⁸¹ Pachymeres, ed. Bonn, I, 321.8.

⁸² Cf. Ostrogorsky, *Féodalité*, 100, for further examples of such possessions held by members of the Palaeologan dynasty, and the extended application of the concept of *pronoia*.

⁸³ Cf. Charanis, "Social Structure," 106; "Aristocracy," 352f.

⁸⁴ Nicephorus Gregoras, ed. Bonn, I, 233-4.

son, Andronicus III.⁸⁵ At the same period his sons appeared in Salonica in the capacity of his vicegerents: first the Despot Constantine, then the Despot Demetrius.⁸⁶

After the civil war of the 1340's, in the reign of John VI Cantacuzene, the granting of appanages to younger members of the imperial family became something of a system. John Cantacuzene allotted to his eldest son Matthew a considerable appanage in western Thrace, extending from Didymoteichus to the outskirts of Christopolis; that is to say, right up to the Serbian frontier of those times. He later made this appanage over to his son-in-law John V Palaeologus—granting to Matthew the region of Adrianople—and entrusted the Byzantine lands in the Morea, which had by now also acquired the characteristics of an appanage, to his youngest son, the Despot Manuel. Thessaly, in the hands of the *sebastocrator* John Angelus, also had in all essentials this appanage character; the Emperor had entrusted its government to John in 1342, regulating the details of his rights and obligations in a special chrysobull.⁸⁷

The dismemberment of the Empire proceeded apace. By the end of John V's reign, with all its internal strife, neither the unity of the Empire nor unity of government could really be said to exist any longer. Of course, John V had his residence in Constantinople, as the formal head of the Empire; but the towns on the Propontis, remnants of the Byzantine possessions in Thrace, were now the appanage of his eldest son Andronicus IV, the region around Salonica was the appanage of his second son Manuel II, whilst the Morea had become that of his third son, the Despot Theodore.⁸⁸

⁸⁵ In spite of the energetic opposition shown by Andronicus II to the plans of his Latin wife, these plans were not in reality as alien to the Byzantines as Gregoras affirms in his tirade. According to the same Gregoras (I, 285.7), Andronicus the Younger had at an earlier date been yearning for the independent possession of some part of the Empire.

⁸⁶ We are informed, once again by Gregoras, that the founder of the Palaeologan dynasty, Michael VIII, already had it in mind to set up for his son Constantine an independent rule over the region of Thessalonica, and that this intention would have been carried out had not the Emperor died in the meantime. The formulation used by Gregoras is quite expressive: ἐβούλετο γάρ...τὸ περὶ Θεσσαλονίκην τε καὶ Μακεδονίαν μέρος τῆς ὅλης ἡγεμονίας Ῥωμαίων ἀποτεμῶν ἰδίαν ἀρχὴν τινα περιποιήσασθαι τούτῳ καὶ βασιλείον αὐτοκρατορίαν (I, 187.18).

⁸⁷ Cantacuzene cites this chrysobull in his History, II, 312–22. The main points of this remarkable document are summarized by A. Solovjev, *op. cit.*, 164f., and Zakythinos, *op. cit.*, 506ff., who remarks, "Nulle part ailleurs les traits féodaux ne se dessinent avec tant d'évidence" (*ibid.*, 514). On John Angelus (who was probably the first cousin rather than the nephew of John Cantacuzene), see the entry in D. Nicol, *The Byzantine Family of Kantakouzenos (Cantacuzenus)*, Dumbarton Oaks Studies, XI (Washington, D.C., 1968), No. 37, 147f. On the title of *sebastocrator* received by him after the accession of Cantacuzene, see Ferjančić, *op. cit.*, 184ff.

⁸⁸ In the last decades of the Empire's existence, Byzantine Morea was in turn divided into several parts, ruled by some of the numerous sons of the Emperor Manuel II. Each one of these was in full possession of his own appanage. The status of the Morea is studied in detail in the well-known work by D. Zakythinos, *Le despotat grec de Morée*, II (Athens, 1953), esp. 71ff., and in a more recent but insufficiently known book in Serbian by B. Ferjančić concerning the despots in Byzantium and the South Slav countries (*Despoti u Vizantiji i južnoslovenskim zemljama* [Belgrade, 1960], esp. 126ff.) who rightly emphasizes the analogies between the status of the Morea and other appanage possessions of that period. The recognition of the Emperor's superior rights did not limit in practice the independence of the holders of such appanages. They stood at the head of the armed forces, the administration and the judicial apparatus of their region. They concluded treaties with other governments to which they could grant commercial privileges and at times make territorial concessions. They exchanged landed possessions among each other: not only did parts of the Morea change hands, but occasionally these were traded for possessions on the Black Sea coast and *vice versa*. When the Emperor became the vassal of the Turkish sultan, this did not entail similar obligations on the part of the rulers of the Morea:

To this list of semi-autonomous regions we may add one more principality of similar character. It was created at the end of the 1350's by two brothers, the grand *stratopedarch* Alexius and the grand *primicerius* John. The story of these two Byzantine aristocrats and the towns which they conquered is highly instructive. It throws a vivid light on the condition of the Empire at that time, and on the part which some members of the higher aristocracy were able to play in determining its fate:

After the collapse of the empire of Stephen Dušan (d. 1355) the Byzantines had an opportunity of seizing the offensive and trying to recover at least some part of what they had lost at the hands of the mighty Serbian ruler. Attempts to do this were made, but what is remarkable is that not one of them was originated by the central authority of the Empire. It was a matter of separate and uncoordinated initiatives by the great feudal lords. From Thrace Matthew Cantacuzene invaded the region of Philippi, but was soon utterly crushed and handed over to his rival, the Emperor John Palaeologus, by the Serbian Caesar Vojichna, the Lord of Drama (1357). The former ruler of Epirus, the Despot Nicephorus II, the descendant of earlier rulers in northern Greece and son-in-law of John Cantacuzene, won some impressive successes at first; supported by the local Greek aristocracy, he restored his power in Thessaly and Epirus but met with opposition from the Albanians and died in battle against them (1358). Only the grand *stratopedarch* Alexius and the grand *primicerius* John were able to achieve more solid results in their campaign on the north Aegean coast, and I should like to say something more about this campaign.⁸⁹

Until a short time ago the origins and personalities of these brothers were a puzzle. The historians have nothing whatever to say about them and the documents usually give only their Christian names and titles, not mentioning their family. It has, however, become clear that these "personnages mystérieux" (as Lemerle calls them), these "frères énigmatiques" (to quote Zakythinos) bore the name of Palaeologus and were the sons of the grand domestic Demetrius Palaeologus.⁹⁰ In the documents the younger brother, John is consistently called the brother-in-law (γαμβρός) of the Emperor—in fact, he bore this relationship not to the Emperor but to the Empress Helena Cantacuzene, and not through her sister but through her cousin Anna Asan. Indeed, the kinship of these brothers to the Emperor was, it would seem, a very distant one, and their claim to belong to the family of Palaeologus somewhat forced.

the Despot Theodore I recognized the sultan's higher authority considerably later than did his father, the Emperor John V.

Quite characteristic in this respect are the conditions that arose in the area of Thessalonica when, after the battle of Angora, it was returned to Byzantium by the provisions of an agreement concluded with Suleiman (1405). Manuel II transferred this region to his co-ruler and rival John VII. The two emperors signed an agreement to this effect and confirmed it by oath. Manuel II describes this agreement as an ὀρκωτικόν, as he does the prior agreement with Suleiman. Cf. G. Ostrogorsky, "Byzance état tributaire de l'Empire turc," *Zbornik radova Viz. Inst.*, 5 (1958), 54.

⁸⁹ The activity of the brothers Alexius and John was first pointed out and partly elucidated by P. Lemerle, *Philippe et la Macédoine orientale à l'époque chrétienne et byzantine* (Paris, 1945), 206ff.

⁹⁰ Cf. G. Ostrogorsky, *Serska oblast posle Dušanove smrti* (Belgrade, 1965), 149ff., on the basis of a document of their mother, Anna Cantacuzena Palaiologina, dated August 1373, ed. Ktenas, 'Επετ. Ἑταιρ. Βυλ. Σπουδῶν, 4 (1927), No. 8, 300-305.

Still, adorned as they were with exalted titles, joined by close or distant ties of kinship to the powerful families of Palaeologus, Cantacuzene, and Asan, they manifestly belonged to the highest Byzantine aristocracy. Taking advantage of the situation which prevailed after the death of Dušan, these two young Byzantine noblemen launched an offensive in the coastal region of eastern Macedonia and achieved some notable successes.

In 1356 or early in 1357 they managed to win back the coastal towns of Chrysopolis and Anaktoropolis, which had been occupied by the Serbs in Dušan's reign, and also the island of Thasos.⁹¹ Moreover, shortly afterward, in 1357 or 1358, they recovered Christopolis (Kavalla), the most important point on the north Aegean coast.⁹² There, however, their successes came to an end, and the inland region of eastern Macedonia remained under the control of the Serbian principality of Serres.

The grand *stratopedarch* Alexius and the grand *primicerius* John recognized the sovereign rights of their Emperor, and they were, formally, his loyal servants. Yet—and this is the most interesting aspect of the matter—the Byzantine government had, seemingly, no part in their enterprise. Alexius and John acted on their own, with their own forces, and it is not surprising that they personally benefited from their conquests. By a chrysobull of March 9, 1357, which has survived in an Italian translation, the Emperor John V Palaeologus granted them Christopolis, Anaktoropolis, and the island of Thasos as their personal property; that is to say, he sanctioned the *status quo*, formally conceding to the conquerors what they already held.⁹³ The charter whereby they were accorded authority over Christopolis has not survived, but later Greek documents call them the *archontes* of that city⁹⁴ and a Venetian document of 10 January 1373 sent to the grand *primicerius* John (his elder brother had died by then) is addressed *domino Christopoli*.⁹⁵ The Venetians clearly understood that the conquered towns were only formally under the sovereignty of the Emperor and that their real lords were those who had won them back. The reoccupied towns were for a long time in the joint possession of the brothers Alexius and John Palaeologus, and after the death of Alexius (about 1370) they remained under the control of his younger brother right up to their occupation by the Turks. In his will, dated 1384, John mentions only his domains on the

⁹¹ Cf. Lemerle, *op. cit.*, 206f.

⁹² Contrary to the prevailing opinion that Christopolis remained under Byzantine rule and was not affected by Dušan's conquests, I believe I have been able to prove that it was in fact occupied by Dušan and was later won back by precisely the brothers Alexius and John. See *Serska oblast*, 25ff. The emotional and altogether confused "critique" of this conclusion in the book of K. Chionēs, 'Ιστορία τῆς Καβάλας (Kavalla, 1968), 99ff., cannot be taken seriously.

⁹³ Lemerle, *op. cit.*, 206. A month later, John V likewise confirmed by his chrysobull of April 1357 the two brothers' rights of ownership over the *kellion* of Rhabdouchos on Mt. Athos, which became the kernel of the Pantocrator monastery built by them. Cf. *Actes de Pantocrator*, ed. L. Petit, *VizVrem*, 10 (1903), Suppl., No. 2. This chrysobull expressed merely the spiritual authority of the Byzantine Emperor, for, in fact, Mt. Athos had been for more than ten years under Serbian rule. The *protos* Dorotheos, from whom the brothers Alexius and John received the above-mentioned *kellion*, was also a Serb.

⁹⁴ Cf. the decree of the Patriarch Philotheos of 1365: Miklosich and Müller, I, 476.

⁹⁵ Lemerle, *op. cit.*, 209f. In the Venetian documents the names of John and Alexius are confused. Lemerle has ingeniously explained how this confusion arose.

island of Thasos (the towns on the mainland were already in Turkish hands) and these he bequeathes to the monastery of the Pantocrator on Athos, which he and his brother had founded.⁹⁶

There is a contemporary hagiographic source which tells us of an interesting episode in the life of the grand *primicerius* John, which supplements the data provided by the documents. After the disaster on the Maritza River in September 1371 ("after the destruction of the despot Uglješa at the hands of the Ishmaelites")—the *Life of St. Niphon* relates—the Turks fitted out a squadron and moved against Mount Athos with arms taken from the defeated Serbs and with siege engines. Everyone under attack was seized with panic, and even the grand *primicerius* John was unable to offer any resistance. But suddenly three large and heavily-armed Venetian ships turned up—in answer, the *Life* would have us believe, to the prayers of St. Niphon. They had come to the assistance of John, and the combined forces scattered the Turks.⁹⁷ Thus, the grand *primicerius*, lord of the north Aegean coastal towns, and founder of one of the monasteries on Mount Athos appears in the guise of a protector of the Holy Mountain, watches over the security of its monasteries, and is ready to come to their defense; when his own powers turn out to be inadequate, he makes an alliance with stronger ones. That his forces were somewhat limited is evident from the fact that three Venetian ships decided the battle.

What sort of power and authority did the brothers Alexius and John Palaeologus exercise over their lands? It is quite clear that these two aristocrats (and, after 1370, one of them) ruled over the towns on the mainland and on Thasos just as the Emperor's sons had ruled over their various possessions in the Propontis, Salonica, and the Peloponnese. Another question is equally relevant; what was the nature of the armed forces, with the aid of which they carried out their warlike undertakings? We find an answer in the will of the grand *primicerius* John, already referred to. In it he shows an especial solicitude for—what he calls—"my people" (τῶν κατ' ἐμαυτόν), those who had helped him and fought for him and his late brother.⁹⁸ He calls them the "sons" and "brothers" of his soul, and he was their common father and brother. "They labored greatly," he writes, "they came to our help and co-operated with us in every way they could and showed themselves most loyal and benevolent in their dealings with us, frequently exposing their very lives to all kinds of peril."⁹⁹ It is clear that he is referring to his retinue, the trusty followers who accompanied a feudal seigneur on his campaigns.

This brings us back to the question already touched upon—the feudal retinue in Byzantium. The words of John Palaeologus are the more valuable in that they tell us about the social status of members of his retinue. His com-

⁹⁶ *Actes de Pantocrator*, No. 6.

⁹⁷ F. Halkin, "La Vie de St. Niphon," *AnalBoll*, 58 (1940), 24–25. The panic that occurred on Mt. Athos after the battle of the Maritza, and the flight of the monks are mentioned in another contemporary hagiographic document: see F. Halkin, "Un ermite des Balkans au XIV^e siècle. La vie grecque inédite de S. Romylos," *Byzantion*, 31 (1961), 142–43. Cf. now G. Ostrogorskij, "Sveta Gora posle Maričke bitke," *Zbornik Filoz. fakulteta*, 10/1 (Belgrade, 1970), 277 ff.

⁹⁸ *Actes de Pantocrator*, No. 6, 123.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, lines 124–27.

panions in arms were no mere dependent *paroikoi*, and in committing them after his death to the care of the monastery of the Pantocrator, the grand *primicerius* emphasizes that they are to serve it not "out of any dependent or servile obligation" but rather prompted by their own free choice and the protection they would enjoy from the monastery (οὐ λόγῳ παροικίας ἢ δουλείας τινός... ἀλλὰ μᾶλλον ἐλευθερίας καὶ δυνατῆς περιθάλψεως).¹⁰⁰ If they so choose, they are authorized to lay down their charge in connection with the monastery and depart from its lands.

We have already considered a number of instances where earlier Byzantine narrative sources testify to the existence of the feudal retinue, and such sources are no less enlightening, in this respect, when we come to the fourteenth century. For instance, Nicephorus Gregoras tells us that in 1342 the forces of John Cantacuzene consisted of 2,000 assorted warriors and cavalry, on the one hand, and on the other, "his kinsmen and other nobles, who, together with the members of their retinue (ἅμα ὁπόσοι τῆς σφῶν θεραπείας ἦσαν) came in number to something like 500."¹⁰¹ Referring to the same period, there is a passage in John Cantacuzene about the forces of his rivals, then advancing on Salonica; they were joined by the eparch Monomachus "with his own people" (ἅμα τοῖς οἰκείοις).¹⁰²

The idea of Byzantium is usually associated with the picture of a powerful centralized state, which had at its disposal a vast bureaucratic machine, operating with a high degree of perfection. Such a picture did once correspond with the facts, but, over the centuries, developments drastically modified these facts and nothing was left of the power and glory of earlier times except a few pathetic survivals, proud memories, and pretensions that could not be realized. Just as the Empire of the last Palaeologi was very different from that of Basil II, both in its extent and its power, so does the structure of the later Byzantine State, as described by Pseudo-Codinus in the mid-fourteenth century, bear little resemblance to the imposing apparatus of government that is reflected in Constantine Porphyrogenitus' *Book of Ceremonies*.

In the earlier sense of the term, this "apparatus of government" had ceased to exist. Offices of the highest importance had become mere honorific titles, which no longer carried any defined obligations, and all recollection of their earlier significance had been wiped out. Pseudo-Codinus tells us, for instance, that the eparch no longer exercises any functions, that the duties of the logothete τοῦ γενικοῦ are unknown to him, and that the logothete of the drome *did* have some sort of official obligations once upon a time, but what these were he cannot say—in any case, this personage no longer has any official function.¹⁰³ The titles of Byzantine dignitaries as they appear in the lists of Pseudo-Codinus and in contemporary documents, are something halfway between the earlier functions and mere empty appellations, and they serve

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, line 141.

¹⁰¹ Gregoras, II, 628.2.

¹⁰² Cantac., II, 236.12. Cf. F. Barišić, "Mihailo Monomah, eparh i veliki kontostavl," *Zbornik radova Viz. Inst.*, 11 (1968), 229.

¹⁰³ Pseudo-Codinus, ed. J. Verpeaux (Paris, 1966), 176.15, 178.10, 24.

primarily to denote the rank of those who hold them. This was the only essential point left. Things were falling apart, but the proper hierarchical order amongst those who clustered around the emperor must still be strictly maintained.

The circle of these courtiers was, however, by now a very narrow one. They were representatives of a number of aristocratic families, linked among themselves by ties of blood or marriage and—the crucial point—attached by such bonds to the dynasty itself, the first and foremost of aristocratic families. Among the emperor's "own people," his *οἰκεῖοι*, persons who held the most honored position, and represented the very highest level of the notables of the Empire, were those who were privileged to consider themselves his kith and kin. These he would call not merely his "own people" but his "well-loved uncles, cousins, brother-in-law, nephews," and so on.¹⁰⁴ If we compare the number of those styled, in the documents, as merely his "own people" with those who are specifically stated to be his kinsmen, we shall soon notice that from the mid-fourteenth century onward the proportion tilts sharply in favor of the latter.¹⁰⁵ In the highest ranks the dignitaries mentioned are almost exclusively those who are related to the dynasty, either genuine kinsmen or those who could count themselves such by virtue of the generous interpretation which the Byzantines customarily applied to degrees of affinity. In short, the Clan Palaeologus ruled the remnants of the Byzantine Empire.

To conclude this brief historical sketch I should like in a few words to portray the typical Byzantine nobleman. As a social type, how will he appear to us? Generally, he would be, first and foremost, an imperial dignitary, the bearer of a title of honor which defined his place in the court hierarchy, and he would perform some function in the service of the State, a function precisely defined in the great days of the administrative system, but which had become rather

¹⁰⁴ The epithet "beloved" (περιπόθητος) was applied only to dignitaries who were considered to be the emperor's relatives, not to ordinary *οἰκεῖοι*. This has been noted by J. Verpeaux, "Les *οἰκεῖοι*. Notes d'histoire institutionnelle et sociale," *REByz.*, 23 (1965), 97. He admits, however, having found one *οἰκεῖος καὶ πεφιλημένος τῇ βασιλείᾳ μου*, namely the grand domestic Raoul under Andronicus III. The explanation of this case is quite simple: the act in question (A. Guillou, *Les archives de Saint-Jean-Prodrome sur le Mont Ménécée* [Paris, 1955], No. 25) was in reality issued not by Andronicus III, but by the Serbian Emperor Stephen Dušan. Cf. G. Ostrogorsky, "Alexios Raul, Grossdomestikos von Serbien," *Festschrift P. E. Schramm* (Wiesbaden, 1964), 340 ff.

¹⁰⁵ In his richly documented article, Verpeaux (*op. cit.*, 95) notes that in the acts of Andronicus II and Andronicus III, the *οἰκεῖοι* outnumber imperial relatives, but he also observes that "the acts of John V mention, almost exclusively, relatives," without, however, drawing any conclusions from this fact. In general, Verpeaux was inclined to underestimate the distinction between these two groups. He pointed out, for example, that the titles of *panhypersebastos* and *protovestiarios* were not conferred on ordinary *οἰκεῖοι*, but that the latter could receive the high dignity of grand domestic. He quotes in evidence an example from a Chilandar document (*Actes grecs de Chilandar*, No. 131) which mentions an *οἰκεῖος τῇ βασιλείᾳ μου μέγας δομέστικος κύρις Στέφανος ὁ Χρέλης*. This instance is not convincing, since Chrelis or Relja was a Serbian magnate who went over temporarily to the Byzantine side and naturally could not have been a relative of the Byzantine emperor; just as the grand domestic Alexius Raoul who joined the Serbian side (see previous note) could not have been a relative of the Serbian emperor. On the other hand, we are unable to name a single Byzantine grand domestic in the service of the Byzantine government at that time who was not related to his emperor. Concerning Relja see the valuable study of M. Dinić, "Relja Ohmućević, istorija i predanje," *Zbornik radova Viz. Inst.*, 9 (1966), 95 ff.

vague in the period of its disintegration. "Do not refuse to serve, or to hold positions of command in the themes" is the advice of Cecaumenus; "know this, that the post of duty comes as a blessing from God."¹⁰⁶ In the great days of the Empire, military, civil, and court positions belonged to clearly differentiated, but not mutually exclusive, categories. Civilians, and even court dignitaries often not merely took part in military campaigns, but held command in them. We find in Byzantium (and this, of course, holds true for the Middle Ages as a whole) that the art of war was really the principal occupation of the aristocracy; so the nobleman, be he a member of the imperial family or a simple *pronoiar*, was, in the nature of things, a warrior.

As a rule, the Byzantine nobleman was a landowner, and landholding was the economic foundation of the aristocracy's position. Let us hear Cecaumenus once more: "There is no source of revenue which stands above the cultivation of land."¹⁰⁷ Landholding was not merely a profitable occupation and the most natural one for the nobleman to follow; it was the only one befitting the dignity of his rank. It is true that for the most part, aristocratic landowners lived in the towns, above all in Constantinople, and were content there to receive the revenues from their lands; but, of course they also paid visits to their estates where they had their "lordly manors."¹⁰⁸ The nobleman's lands were cultivated by his dependent peasants (*paroikoi*) who paid him their dues and fulfilled certain labor obligations. Thus, every aristocratic landowner was the seigneur and unlimited master over the dependent peasant population which was settled on his lands. The higher aristocracy were as much set apart by the great size of their estates, often enormous, by the numbers of their *paroikoi*, and by the value of their revenues as they were by their positions at court and their resounding titles of honor.

But to belong to the aristocracy was not only a matter of birth, exalted rank, and wealth; it also necessarily implied participation in the refined Greek culture of the time. This sense of cultural participation, which R. Jenkins has described so penetratingly,¹⁰⁹ was especially characteristic of the higher Byzantine aristocracy, who formed the educated *élite* of the Empire. The ability to write in a florid classical language which was thought to be that of the ancient Greek writers, philosophers, and orators distinguished this *élite* from ordinary mortals even more than did noble ancestry. We may recall Constantine Porphyrogenitus reproaching his father-in-law Romanus Lecapenus, first, for being "a common, illiterate fellow" (ιδιώτης καὶ ἀγράμματος ἀνθρώπος ἦν) and, second, because he was not "of imperial and noble stock" (οὐτε ἀπὸ γένους βασι-

¹⁰⁶ Cecaumenus, par. 111, p. 47.1.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, par. 88, p. 36.12.

¹⁰⁸ We may recall the οἰκήματα δεσποτικά of the *sebastocrator* Isaac Comnenus at Neocastron, the center of his possessions near Ainos (see *supra*, p. 16). Anna Comnena (*Alex.*, ed. Leib, II, 171.10) relates that the young Constantine Doucas entertained the Emperor Alexius on his estate near Ephesus, where he had houses "suitable for receiving an emperor" (ἀποχρῶντα οἰκήματα ἔχοντα πρὸς τὴν βασιλέως ὑποδοχήν).

¹⁰⁹ R. J. H. Jenkins, *Byzantium and Byzantinism*. Lectures in Memory of Louise Taft Semple (Cincinnati, 1963), 8ff. Cf. also his important article, "The Hellenistic Origins of Byzantine Literature," *DOP*, 17 (1963), 37ff.

λικοῦ καὶ εὐγενοῦς).¹¹⁰ Culture and education came first, outweighing lineage. And, in fact, even in later times, when the Empire was more strongly differentiated socially, it was easier for a social parvenu from the dregs of society to be assimilated into the ranks of the aristocracy than it would have been for an "illiterate fellow," a cultural parvenu who was a total stranger to Greek learning and wisdom.

But, despite being people of Greek culture, the Byzantine aristocracy were not always Greek in origin. As is well known, there were to be found amongst them not a few representatives of the other ethnic groups who lived within the bounds of the racially variegated Empire. One might suppose that such men, having spent their lives in the service of the Byzantine State and having become assimilated to Greek culture, must have come to forget their ethnic origins; but in fact this was not always the case. Let us look, for instance, at the Georgian Gregory Pacurianos, an outstanding Byzantine personality and a notable military figure, who especially distinguished himself under Alexius I Comnenus. He helped this Emperor to ascend the throne, and received in return the exalted title of Grand Domestic of the West. He was further rewarded with the grant of extensive lands. He often led Byzantine armies to victory, and he perished on the field of battle, defending the Empire against the Pechenegs. Yet, when he founded the celebrated monastery of Bačkov, which still exists in the Rhodopean mountains, not far from Plovdiv in modern Bulgaria, he laid it down that no "Roman" priests or monks should be admitted into it. He explains his reasons for making this unexpected and rather startling prohibition. "The Romans," he says in the *typicon* which he drew up for his monastery, "are violent by nature, deceitful, and grasping" (βίαιοι ὄντες καὶ περίλογοι καὶ πλεονέκται), and he is afraid lest they somehow or other gain control of the monastery and turn it into their own property, something which, as he affirms, he has often known to happen.¹¹¹ In admitting monks, care must be taken to preserve a preponderance of Iberians "our kinsmen, who are near to us by blood"; to these he gives preference over "strangers and foreigners" (τοὺς ξένους καὶ τοὺς ἐξωτερικοὺς).¹¹² So it appears that this Byzantine magnate, who had had a brilliant career in the imperial service, was rewarded with many marks of imperial favor, and finally made the supreme sacrifice for his Emperor, felt himself to be an alien in the ruling circles of the "Romans," men whom his inner judgment condemned and toward whom he nurtured

¹¹⁰ *De Administrando imperio* (rev. ed.), ed. Moravcsik-Jenkins, Dumbarton Oaks Texts, I (Washington, D.C., 1967), chap. 13, 149-52.

¹¹¹ "Typikon de Grégoire Pacourianos pour le monastère de Pétritzos (Bačkov) en Bulgarie," ed. L. Petit, *VizVrem*, 11 (1904), Suppl., No. 1, par. 24, pp. 44-45. One is not, of course, to imagine that Pacurianos was specifically empowered to forbid to Greeks access to his monastery, or that he included in the typicon this provision (as well as its motivation?) with the knowledge and consent of the Emperor. Yet such was the opinion of Marr who explained the granting of these "exceptional rights" to Pacurianos on the supposition that his Georgian monastery had the special mission of helping the Byzantine government in its struggle against Armenian Paulicians. See N. Marr, "Arkaun, mon-gol'skoe nazvanie christian, v svjazi s voprosom ob armjanach-chalkedonitach," *VizVrem*, 12 (1906), 17ff., esp. 25; cf. *idem*, "Ioann Petricskij, grusinzkij neoplatonik XI-XII veka," *Zapiski vostočnogo otd. Imper. Russk. Archeol. Obšč.*, 19 (1910), 53ff.

¹¹² "Typikon de Grégoire Pacourianos," par. 25, p. 45.

jaundiced feelings. Of course, we should not too readily generalize from this instance; but neither can we simply treat it as of no significance.¹¹³ The binding force of Greek culture and the Orthodox faith was indisputably great; but, however powerful these unifying factors may have been, it seems that they could not wholly counteract internal differences and tensions.

Whilst revering Greek culture, the aristocrat, like every Byzantine, was usually devoted to the Orthodox faith and Church. Generally speaking, he would have an unshakable belief in the truth and the saving grace of Orthodoxy, and would reject every other confession as heresy. He would zealously perform the rites and obligations of his Church. These were the things that most of all shaped his view of the world and the pattern of his daily life. The gulf which generally separated the aristocracy and the lower orders was bridged in these matters. The aristocrat, no less than other Byzantines, was moved to make material sacrifices for the Church by the desire to save his soul. Naturally, the scale of his sacrifices tended to be more impressive than that of humbler folk. For the rich aristocrat, a man in the public eye, it was, in its way, a matter of honor to found a monastery, to be its *ktitor*, and the more magnificent the foundation, the greater the prestige accruing to the founder. So it was (to recall examples we have already touched on) with the Grand Domestic Gregory Pacurianos and the monastery of Bačkovó, with the *sebastocrator* Isaac Comnenus and the monastery of the Theotokos Kosmosoteira near Ainos, and with those brothers Alexius and John Palaeologus, the founders of the Pantocrator on Athos. To personal ambition and the pride of caste were often added visions of material gain, especially clear, perhaps in the case of those who undertook the administration of monasteries as *charistikarii*.

In following the development of the Byzantine aristocracy, we have seen how, as a class, they persistently increased their wealth, how their privileges were enlarged, and how their political influence grew. But this does not, of course, necessarily hold true of every individual nobleman. All through the history of the Empire we come across members of this class whose fortunes rose and fell sharply. Any of them might lose his wealth and position from one day to the next, no one could insure himself against the vicissitudes of fate, if only because the fortunes of all of them, even the mightiest, and not excluding members of the dynasty, depended on the will of an autocrat, who rewarded or punished as he saw fit according to his own whim or at a hint from below. The climate of fear, the constant dread of denunciation and of tale-bearing which were naturally engendered in these conditions are vividly conveyed in the "Counsels and Tales" of that same Cecaumenus whom I have already quoted more than once. To maintain silence—that is the most persistent piece

¹¹³ Especially since an analogous situation may be found in the Life of Sts. John and Euthymius, founders of the Iviron monastery on Mount Athos, written in the middle of the eleventh century by George the Athonite. See A. Šanidze, "Stranica iz istorijata na gruzino-bŭlgarskite kulturni vzaimotošoŭenija," *Istoričeski pregled*, 14 (1958), 98ff., where an interesting passage from this Life is quoted in Bulgarian translation: "The Greeks . . . by all possible means attempted to extirpate the Georgians from this monastery" (*op. cit.*, 100–101).

of advice offered by this experienced and cautious man.¹¹⁴ "Avoid conversing with dissolute folk," he warns, "and be on your guard when talking to your companions or to anyone else. Should the discussion turn to the Emperor or the Empress, then do not reply at all, but leave the company. I have known many who imperilled themselves in this matter."¹¹⁵ He is dogged by feelings of distrust toward those around him. "You should be more wary of friends than of foes"¹¹⁶—such are the words with which this Byzantine nobleman of the eleventh century concludes his homily.

Silence surrounded the person of the emperor, not only during court ceremonies and as a mark of greater solemnity and reverence, but also in the doings of everyday life, a silence prompted by ordinary human feelings of fear and the desire for self-preservation. Cecaumenus has depicted this aspect of Byzantine life from close up and with great vividness. It is, unquestionably, an essential part of the picture, if a rather dark one, and something which cannot be omitted in considering the history, in many ways so brilliant and colorful, of Byzantine society, and more particularly, of the Byzantine aristocracy.

¹¹⁴ Especially expressive is the admonition in par. 12, p. 14: πάση φυλακῇ τήρησόν σου τὸ στόμα.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, par. 6, p. 4.3-6.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, par. 226, p. 80.5 and par. 73, p. 27.5; cf. par. 74, p. 28.7.